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THE
AMERICAN PREACHER;

OR, A

COLLECTION OF SERMONS

FROM SOME OF THE

MOST EMINENT PREACHERS,

NOW LIVING,

IN THE UNITED STATES,

OF

DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS

IN THE

CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED.

VOLUME III.

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M.DCC.XCI.

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

THE EDITORS of the AMERICAN PREACHER, in compliance with the request of a very sincere friend to this work, think proper to explain to the public the true purport of the Fifth Article, inserted in the preface to the first volume. The object, aimed at, is entirely political, and has reference simply to the economy of the UNITED STATES, in furnishing themselves with books as productions of their own, rather than to be dependant on foreign importation. The idea was intended to be sufficiently explained in the last clause of the article—"by encouraging the publications of our own country."

The Editors are so far from an inclination to shut the door against the introduction of literary or religious improvement from any country, that they intend, themselves, in due time, to solicit, and hope to receive CONTRIBUTIONS to this work from all countries where Christianity prevails, and where its Ministers may be disposed to build with us on the foundation already laid.

In execution of the plan, already adopted, as it respects the United States, the Editors would inform their Reverend Brethren of the different denominations of the Christian Church, that the door continues open for the reception of such CONTRIBUTIONS as they may be disposed to make for the promotion of this work.

The whole contribution will be held as a SACRED DEPOSITE, from which this work will be selected, from time to time, in such manner as will be judged to give weight, order, and dignity to the SUCCESSIVE VOLUMES.

On the first-day of January next, by the leave of Providence, a selection will be begun for the FOURTH VOLUME, which may be expected out in the course of the ensuing year.

AUGUST, 1791.

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in the MINISTERS of the GOSPEL.**

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I S A A C L E W I S, A. M.

Minister of a Congregational Church, Greenwich, Connecticut.

I TIMOTHY IV. 12.

Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

THE great importance of the office of gospel-ministers, and the necessity of their discharging every part of duty with the strictest fidelity, clearly appears from the particular attention which the scriptures have given to this subject.—The New Testament not only abounds with commands and exhortations, which illustrate this observation, but the two epistles to Timothy, and that to Titus, were written with this professed design; that the nature of the office, and the duties of it,

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* This discourse was preached in the Chapel at New-Haven, Connecticut, the morning after Commencement, September 9, 1790, before a very respectable body of the Clergy, usually styled, *Concio ad Clerum*.

might be fully understood. This the inspired author himself asserts, when he tells Timothy, in the chapter before that which contains our text, *These things write I unto thee, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillow and ground of truth.*

Accordingly, in these epistles we find the character delineated, which those ought to possess who are employed in this sacred work, and the whole duty of the scripture-bishop minutely pointed out, and most pathetically urged upon him. Amidst a variety of important observations on this subject, our text is introduced. *Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*

I beg the candor and attention of this reverend and respectable audience, whilst I endeavor to explain this precept; and then shew of how much importance it is, that ministers conduct agreeably to its import.

In attempting to explain this precept, almost the first idea which will strike the mind of an attentive reader, is its great extent. Gospel ministers are the gift of Christ to his church, designed to be made use of for her enlargement and spiritual improvement. That they may answer these purposes, and accomplish every design of their appointment, they are *here* commanded to become living patterns of that most holy religion, which they are to

preach to others. From the example and laws of the great head of the church, they are to derive all the rules of their lives; and so closely to adhere to them, as to become daily copies for the imitation of every member of the flock, over whom the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers. *Be thou an example of the believers.* This is the general duty upon which the apostle enlarges, by descending into the particular branches of that exemplary conduct, which it behoves ministers ever to maintain, *in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*

Some suppose that the apostle, by the *word*, here intends the familiar conversation of ministers with their people, on such subjects as occasionally come to view, in their common intercourse with them; and, by *conversation*, their general behavior and conduct. But this construction neither appears a natural one, nor does it preserve a proper distinction, between the several particulars here mentioned. Others, whose opinion is much to be preferred, suppose that, by the *word*, the apostle means the word of truth, the doctrines which are according to godliness. And the original not only confirms this opinion, but the obvious importance of right sentiments in the public teachers of religion, and the ruinous tendency of error in such characters, render it more than probable that this must be the true construction. The experience of the Christian church, in every age, loudly proclaims the fa-

tal effects of examples of errors in ministers. And it is a mortifying reflection, that truth obliges us to confess, that most of the errors that have prevailed in the world, have owed their origin to the clergy. This melancholy fact, foreseen by the spirit of inspiration, it is not improbable, might be the reason why the apostle was so particular, as to give it in command to ministers, to be examples of orthodoxy—to be careful to maintain the true gospel, unmixed with erroneous alloy; and so strictly to adhere to the sacred oracles, that none may ever have an opportunity of pleading their examples, to justify them in making shipwreck of the faith. For if they, whose office it is to teach and defend the truth, become the friends and vouchers of error, it is not to be expected but that numbers will follow their pernicious ways, by means of whom the way of truth will be evil spoken of.

If then, we are to suppose, that the apostle, in his first particular, requires that ministers become *examples* to the flock, by being patterns, as well as defenders of gospel-truth it will be natural to conclude, that by being exemplary in conversation, he intends such a general course of Christian conduct, as will be worthy of the daily imitation of their people. An exemplary conversation, in this view of it, includes a strict attention to Christian practice—a behavior that shall be a constant expression of sincere piety towards God—of all social affections and

virtues towards men, according to the several relations we stand in to them; and of temperance, sobriety, and all the virtues of that self-government, which the scriptures enjoin. Nor can I think it improper to observe, that the exemplary conversation, spoken of in the text, refers not only to our public, but to our more private conduct.— It requires that we become patterns of the conjugal and parental virtues, as well as of those which respect society, considered in a more extensive view. These, though virtues more confined, and exercised within a narrower circle, are yet very important in their consequences, and must doubtless make a part of what is included in a good conversation.

The third branch of that exemplary behavior which is enjoined in the text, the apostle expresses by the word *charity*. And as the same word, both in the original, and our translation, is made use of in the 13th chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, it may well be presumed, that it is used in the same sense in both passages. In the place last mentioned, he tells us, that charity is the great principle of true religion, that in which a gospel-holiness summarily consists, and without which every other attainment is in vain, and will profit a man nothing. He goes on to observe, that it will fill us with a spirit of patience and forbearance, incline us to be slow to wrath, and ready to forgive injuries; that it will influence us to be kind

unto all men, and to seek the good of others, even to the injury of ourselves. That if we are endowed with it, we shall be inclined to interpret doubtful things in the best sense; be afflicted both with the misfortunes and misconduct, even of enemies; rejoice in the good of all; and lastly, that this grace will never fail, but accompany the saint to glory, and be enlarged and perfected when faith shall be swallowed up in open vision, and hope be converted into full enjoyment.

If then, as appears to be fact, the word *charity* is used in the same sense in our text, the command will stand thus: Let that holy love, which is the sum of all true virtue, dwell in your hearts, and direct your daily conduct. Give yourself up so entirely to its influence, that they, for whose souls you watch, may ever behold in you a striking example for their imitation. Let them ever be able to discover the nature of true holiness, by an attentive observation of your life.

What the apostle intends by commanding ministers to be examples *in spirit*, may, we believe, be learned by attending to the use of that word in some other places of scripture. In the 12th chapter of his epistle to the Romans, where he is urging on them the necessity of practical religion, after directing them to be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another, he adds, *Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.* This fervor of spirit,

it is obvious is a zeal for the glory of God, accompanied with vigor and activity in the divine service. And among several other excellencies, which make up that amiable character that is given of the eloquent Apollos, it is said, *That being fervent in SPIRIT, he spake and taught the things of the Lord.* That is, his heart was warmly impressed with a sense of the importance of divine truth, filled with zeal for the glory of his God, and the good of his fellow-men; and the fruit of all this was great diligence in his important calling. From a comparison of our text with these scriptures, it appears most probable that, by the word *spirit*, the apostle means fervor of spirit, the zeal of true piety, inclusive, perhaps, of the fruits of the spirit, which the same apostle enumerates in the 5th chapter of his epistle to the Galatians. Admitting this construction, it is as if he had said to Timothy, it is highly unbecoming any Christian, much more a minister of the gospel, to appear with a spirit of indifferency towards his religion; or careless as to the success of the Redeemer's kingdom. Do you then set an example to all believers in your zeal for this important cause. Be fervent and active in the discharge of all the duties of the ministry; and abound in all the fruits of the spirit, that others may be led to a like diligence in their stations, and to a like concern for the cause of Zion.

Faith, which is another word made use of in the text, may be considered either in its original na-

ture, as it respects divine truth more generally considered, or more particularly for that act, by which the believer accepts of the Mediator, and complies with the offers made to him in the gospel. Both the nature of the command here given, and the connexion lead us to consider it in this place, agreeable to the first of these views; as including, not only a firm belief of the divine existence and unlimited perfection, but an unshaken confidence in the truth of the doctrines, promises and threatenings of divine revelation. In this general sense, the apostle tells us, that *faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.* It gives such a present subsistence to the mind of the Christian, of all future blessings, as imparts the same consolations in kind, as will flow from the actual possession of that good which is the object of his hopes. And it communicates to him such a convincing evidence of the truth of things invisible to the bodily eyes, that they have the influence of undoubted realities. By this faith, the ancient worthies, mentioned in the chapter before alluded to, were led to a holy indifferency towards earthly enjoyments, and a chearful acquiescence in that state of affliction, and in those uncommon sufferings to which a faithful adherence to the cause of true religion exposed them. They considered this world as not their home; declared themselves but pilgrims and sojourners in it; and esteemed the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures of the whole earth. Such an unshaken con-

fidence in the truths of divine revelation ; such an entire dependance on the promises made in the gospel, must be most ornamental to the ministers of religion, and the influence of such an example most salutary to the spiritual interest of mankind. And such, we cannot but suppose, is enjoined in that clause of the text, now under consideration.

The last branch of an exemplary conduct, mentioned in the text, is *purity*, which includes the strictest chastity, together with universal holiness both in heart and life. *Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*

The several particulars which have now been briefly remarked upon, include all the divine, christian, human, and social virtues. And it is farther to be observed, that in order that ministers may become examples in these virtues, it is not only necessary that they practice them in some degree, so as to secure themselves from the reproach of immorality ; but they must be so eminent in them, as that it may be easy for beholders to notice their piety. They are commanded to be copies of a good conversation. And as it is expected that the copy will exceed the imitation ; so the necessity of ministers becoming pre-eminent in every Christian virtue, is here fully expressed.

But we now proceed to shew the great importance of such a conduct in the ministers of the gospel, as is fully agreeable to the true import of

our text. This we hope will appear from the following considerations.

In the first place, it is the *command* of him whose ministers they are. The precept of the text is, *Be thou an example of the believers.* A command of the same import the apostle repeats to Titus, *In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works.* And in the chapter before that which contains our text, *A bishop must be blameless, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality—And of good report among them which are without, lest he fall into reproach, and the snare of the devil.* The same virtues are again required of ministers in the 1st chapter of the epistle to Titus.

If then the command of Christ requires them to be blameless, and especially if it demands of them the maintenance of an unblemished reputation among those who do not belong to the Christian church, doubtless it binds them to be exemplary in every virtue; since this is the only way to support a good character, both with those who are without, and those within. All that is implied in an exemplary conduct, is explicitly demanded of them on the most awful penalties; so that they cannot neglect it without the grossest dishonor to their master, and the utmost danger to themselves.

Moreover, the exemplary conduct of which we are speaking, is absolutely necessary to a minister, in order to his maintaining a *consistency of character.*

Ministers are the ambassadors of Christ, sent by him to their fellow-men to make known the gospel, to explain its doctrines, and enforce a compliance with it, by a proper presentation of all its arguments and motives. *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* They are the stewards of Christ's family, to dispense, agreeably to his directions, the rich treasures of his word and ordinances. *Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.* Their business is to instruct their fellow-men in the knowledge of divine truth, and to urge on them the obligations they are under, not only to repent and believe the gospel, but to practise all the different branches of godliness and humanity. *To instruct, reprove, rebuke, with all long-suffering and doctrine.* In a word, they are the public guardians of religion, set for the defence of the gospel, and under every sacred bond to employ their utmost abilities, for the promotion of evangelical piety. In such an important character, they are called to act, and should they fail of becoming living examples of that religion which they teach to others, the inconsistency of their conduct, with their profession, would strike the mind of every beholder. And the keen reproach with which St. Paul silences the Jews, would justly apply in this case, and might be reasonably expected from every mouth. *Thou, therefore, which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest*

a man shall not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man shall not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abbovest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law, dishonorest thou God?

The inconsistency of character in an unexemplary minister, is too obvious to be concealed from the weakest eye, and too shameful not to procure him general contempt. Surely, if the obligations of religion are binding on any man, it must be on its public teachers. They are under, not only all the common bonds of duty, by which others are bound, but the additional ones which arise from the sacred nature of their office. If they should neglect the duties incumbent on them, or practice the opposite vices, the penetrating eye of the public will quickly discern it, and reproach their inconsistency. There is no way for an unexemplary minister to support a consistency of character. His life daily belies his profession, and contradicts his instruction. An exemplary life only can save him from this absurdity. And the more eminent he is in this, the more ornamental and distinguishing will be the display of his self-consistency.

But we proceed farther to observe, that an exemplary conduct, in ministers, is necessary to the credit of religion.

The public reputation of any cause, either civil or religious, depends very much on the conduct of

its principal abettors. If they maintain a dignity of character, worthy of the professed importance of the cause they are defending, they may rationally expect both to procure respect to themselves, and to add credit to their cause. But if they condescend to an opposite conduct, they will assuredly bring dishonor on themselves, and on the cause in which they profess to be engaged.

These observations apply particularly to the subject now before us. Ministers are the professed supporters of Christianity; they have entered on this service as volunteers, and are considered as its principal defenders. And if the honor of every cause depends on the conduct of its leaders, the honor of Christianity, in the view of the world at large, must be intimately connected with that of its ministers. If they support an amiable character, and walk before their flocks in every thing that is lovely, pure, and of good report, they will not fail of adorning their religion in the view of mankind. Although men are by nature disaffected to the gospel, yet they will view it with a sort of reverence and admiration, when they see its teachers, adding to their important instructions, a life of strict conformity to those divine precepts, which they explain and inculcate on others. This is the only way by which ministers can comply with that command of our Lord—*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

And if an exemplary conduct in ministers is so honorable to religion, and tends so much to promote its reputation, we may assure ourselves, an opposite conduct must be equally reproachful. It is impossible for the teachers of religion to neglect their own personal piety, without exposing themselves to contempt. And impossible thus to expose themselves, without wounding religion. This observation is not founded on bare probability; the scripture furnishes us with an instance, that proves it an undoubted fact. When the sons of Eli abandoned themselves to vice, their impious conduct led the people of Israel to abhor the offerings of the Lord. This is mentioned by the inspired historian, as a peculiar aggravation of their guilt. And the experience of every age can testify, that the dishonor of religion has been the unfailing consequence of a neglect of piety by its ministers.

But we pass on to observe, that a life of conformity to the precept of our text, is necessary in ministers, in order to the *success* of their labors.

It is readily granted, that the efficient cause of a successful ministry, is the spirit of God operating on the hearts and consciences of men. And that without these influences, the most able and faithful minister may labor in vain, and spend his strength for nought. A Paul may plant, and an Apollos water, but it is God alone who can give the increase. But still in perfect consistency with

all this, fidelity in ministers, as a mean, has its influence. And the more learned, pious and laborious ministers are, the greater is the probability of their success. For although the Holy Ghost is as truly the author of the application of salvation to the souls of men, as Christ is of the purchase, yet means are nevertheless made use of in accomplishing this great work. The truth feelingly impressed on the consciences of sinners, convicts them of their guilt. In a view of the great evil of sin, they are led to repentance; and from a discovery of the infinite excellency and all-sufficiency of the Mediator, arises the grace of true faith. Every Christian virtue is exercised in a view of some divine truth. And ministers are made use of as the instruments of presenting these truths to the minds of their hearers. Sinners are convinced and converted, and true Christians edified and quickened by a preached gospel. And if so, the more clearly and plainly ministers declare the truth, the more closely they apply it to the conscience, and the more laborious and faithful they are in every part of their duty, the greater is the probability of their proving successful.

Furthermore, if any exertions of a minister can increase the probability of his success, a holy life must certainly have its influence; for no motive is better calculated to strike and engage the mind of every beholder. It is a lesson of instruction which the weakest can understand, and the most

ignorant feel. It is the language of actions which needs no explanation. A method by which a minister may preach every day; and through means of which, he may explain to his people the true import of every other sermon. In the exemplary conduct of a good minister, evangelical piety appears in real life, adorned with all the force which living example can give; whereas the best sermons are apt to be viewed as descriptions of mere abstract virtues, which too many hearers take the liberty of supposing have no real existence. But when these sermons are accompanied with a corresponding life; when the preacher copies his own preaching, and exhibits a pattern to his flock of all those graces and virtues, which he inculcates on them, every objection to a life of strict religion must be silenced, and every motive to holy living set in a most advantageous point of light. And in that case, every thing is done to increase the probability of success, that the most benevolent exertions can effect. Such faithfulness in preaching and living, the gospel, we believe, is ever attended with a greater or less degree of success, according to the sovereign pleasure of him, who only can secure the increase of what his ministers have planted, and watered with painful labors.

On the other hand, where an exemplary life is wanting, and the duties of religion neglected by its public teachers, every prospect of a successful ministry at once disappears. Although an irreligi-

ous minister should be possessed of the most splendid abilities—though he should be master of the most commanding eloquence, and tho' he should preach the truth, yet, unless a miracle of divine grace prevented, the contagion of his ill example would prove a stronger support to indifferency, and irreligion, than all his powers to persuasion could be to the cause of true piety. A sinful world will much sooner imitate his life, than pay a proper attention to his instruction. The inconsistency between his life and preaching will grieve the pious, harden the secure, establish the infidel in his infidelity, and fill the minds of sinners in general with prejudice against the truth. In such a situation, what can be expected, but a swift declension of true religion?

These observations may be farther confirmed by an appeal to facts. Religion has ever been at its lowest ebb, when ignorance and vice have been the prevailing character of the clergy. If we reflect, we shall find that this was the case with the Jewish church. When the priests said not, where is the Lord? When they that handled the law knew not God. When the pastors transgressed against him, and the prophets prophesied by Baal—then it was that God delivered by his prophet that striking testimony of their apostacy. *Be astonished O ye heavens at this, and be horribly afraid! be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living*

waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water!

Precisely the same evils have accompanied each other in the Christian church. In the dark ages, and especially in the tenth, and several following centuries, it is well known, that the clergy were not only stupidly ignorant, but scandalously immoral. They neglected the duties of their station, and became the ringleaders of almost every vice. The consequence was, the Christian religion was in a manner lost. Low superstition, accompanied with a pompous show of unmeaning and insignificant ceremonies, took the place of that simple and unadorned worship, prescribed in the New Testament. At the same time, vice and ignorance, in their most alarming forms, prevailed amongst all ranks, and triumphed over fallen piety. And in every age, in proportion as the clergy have themselves neglected practical religion, iniquity has abounded, and the love of many waxed cold.

From the foregoing observations, the importance of exemplary lives in the ministers of the gospel sufficiently appears. It is evident from its being the express command of their divine master—from its absolute necessity to consistency of character—to the credit of religion—to the success of their labors, and from the fatal effects, which an opposite conduct never fails to produce. Each of these considerations, separately viewed, are of great weight, and, unitedly, they set before us the

strongest obligations, and most forcible motives to the constant exercise of that piety enjoined in our text.

We are here then naturally led to infer the great importance of the ministerial character.

If gospel-ministers are the ambassadors of Christ—if they are sub-pastors under him the chief shepherd—and if the honor of religion, and the success of the gospel among men, depend so much on their fidelity, the great importance of the office they sustain follows as a necessary consequence. And it becomes every one, who has taken upon him this character, to realize, that he acts in an office, in which the everlasting interests of beings bound for immortality are deeply concerned. *In as much as I am an apostle of the Gentiles, says Saint Paul, I magnify my office.* A high sense of the importance of our character, as gospel-ministers, is really necessary to fidelity in the discharge of our duty.—Without it we shall be in danger of relaxing into carelessness and inattention; for a low opinion of our office must naturally lessen our views of the importance of its duties; and the more inconsiderable we view any duty, the less attention we shall certainly pay to it. Nor can I believe, that a high sense of the importance of our office-characters has any tendency to excite that pride which is so unbecoming the ministers of the lowly Jesus. On the contrary it will inspire humility, as it will dictate a proper sense of our obligations, and of the

number, nature and great solemnity of the duties incumbent on us.

Again, from the foregoing remarks, we may infer the necessity of the strictest fidelity, in the introduction of candidates into the gospel ministry.

If the office we are speaking of is of such great importance—if so much, under God, depends on the abilities and faithfulness of ministers, surely the utmost vigilancy ought to be used, to guard this sacred employment from the approach of the ignorant and irreligious. One who is unfit for the ministry, either through want of proper information, or a religious deportment, will be likely to do more injury to the cause of Christianity in general, and to the churches in our communion in particular, than numbers of the most deserving and faithful can do good. And as ministers are set to guard the door of entrance on this office—as they are commanded to commit this trust to faithful men, and to lay hands suddenly on no man, too much attention to the abilities, sentiments, and religious character of those we induct into the ministry can not be given.

Finally, we see in the foregoing observations, that the ministers of Christ are laid under most solemn obligations to maintain a life of strict religion. They are bound by the commands of their master, not only to take heed to their doctrines—to preach the pure gospel—to shun every error, and rightly to divide the word of truth; but when

they have done all this, to enforce it by holy living.

Suffer me then, my fathers and brethren, to call up your attention to this all-important part of duty. And the more so, as we live in a day when striking examples of piety seem peculiarly necessary to stem the opposing current of vice and immorality. When wickedness is boasting of her conquests, and religion is pushed out of company by a train of fashionable vices; if we should give way, or like the wise virgins in the parable, sleep with the foolish; should we not have reason to tremble for the safety of the ark; and to expect that the torrent of vice, already descending on us, will yet in a more awful manner, overspread our land? Sensible, as I trust we are, of the importance of the contest, let us make a vigorous stand; and by shining examples of piety, as well as seasonable alarms from the desk, let us attack the vices of the age, and shame them out of countenance. Some of the principal motives to all this, though well known, and I doubt not realized, may yet be mentioned with propriety. The honor of God, the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom, the salvation of immortal souls, together with the present comfort and future eternal felicity of ourselves, all conspire to press on us a life of the most exemplary piety. And if any motives can affect us, certainly these must fire us with holy zeal, and arm us with Christian fortitude, to run the delightful road of God's commands.

May that all gracious master whom we serve, and whose grace exceeds our highest thoughts, grant us those aids of his spirit which are necessary to enable us to shine as lights in the world. May he prosper our labors, and succeed our examples, for the conversion of sinners, and the edification of saints. And when he has done serving himself of us here; when he has made us the happy instruments of great good to his Zion, may we have his presence in the hour of death, and from the testimony of a well-informed conscience, be able to adopt that most consolatory triumph of St. Paul. *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to all them that love his appearing.*



S E R M O N XLIII.

TRUE RELIGION.

B Y

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JAMES iii. 17.

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

THE Saviour of the world, in the dawning of the gospel, predicted, *that there should arise false Christs and false prophets, and shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect.* That men should cry, some, *Lo, here is Christ!* and others, *Lo, there!* This prophecy, for the confirmation of the truth of Christianity, has been fulfilled in every period of the Christian era. But perhaps, in no season, and in no part of the globe, hath it received stronger illustration, than it doth in the present time in this western world. Has there been an age in

which greater numbers of sects and parties, and variations of parties, have existed than the present? Yet, if there be any in this assembly in these desultory days of levity, wandering, separation and unsteadiness, who are sincerely seeking religion, and desiring to know wherein it consists, or what it is, here is an infallible description of it, given by the inspired apostle James. A man who had sweet experience of its power, and a certain understanding of its happy effects. The apostle in this chapter, in order more strongly to shew wherein true religion lies, points out many deviations from it in its professors; and at length, more fully and clearly to characterize it, he introduces two sorts of wisdom; *a wisdom which descendeth not from above, and a wisdom that is from above.*

The former wisdom which is from beneath, he thus delineates. It is *earthly, sensual and devilish*. This, with propriety, may be styled *carnal wisdom*, or a *delusive religion*, which like the hypocrite's hope, will fail its possessor, when God takes away his soul. This wisdom is described in its origin and fruits. Its source is negatively intimated. *It descendeth not from above*, that is, from heaven, or from God; therefore, the fountain of it must be in earth, or hell, or both. Its delineation fully declares this, when it is affirmed to be *earthly and devilish*. It is carnal, worldly, covetous, hoarding. Whatever garb it may put on; it secretly hates nobleness, generosity, charity and kindness. *It is sensual*; propense

to all fleshly gratifications, to intemperance, slothfulness, and uncleanness, as far as these sensual indulgences may not be checked or prohibited by the superior influence of meanness and avarice. *It is devilish*, malicious, cunning, crafty and deceitful. This is the nature of that wisdom or religion which is from beneath. What other streams can be supposed to flow from such a source, than those St. James mentions, to wit, bitter envyings, strife, boasting and falsehood? Envyings, with strict justness, are termed bitter, because they are so in their operation and consequences. Envy, what a bitter corroding passion! Solomon of old, pronounced it, *the rottenness of the bones!* It is like scaled bones making their way through ulcerated flesh. Envy sometimes gives uneasiness to its object, but always torments the breast in which it is harbored. What stage in life is free from this unhappy temper? The great envy the greater; the middling rank those before it; the poor, the rich, the foolish, the wise; and the lowest class of the human species has a thousand objects, against which their feeble envy is directed, and from which it rebounds to invigorate their misery.

Strife, is the next fruit of this carnal religion, and it receives in all its exertions, strong reinforcements from envy. *Where strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. He loveth transgression, that loveth strife.* It is aided by pride, and their combination often create a world of mischief.

Who can enumerate the evils which strife introduces into families, neighborhoods, congregations, towns, and even nations? Alienation of affections, reproaches, slander, wars and bloodshed, generally take their origin from strife and envy.

Boasting is another effect of this inferior wisdom. *Glory not*, saith our apostle. He well knew how congenial *boasting* or *glorying* is to our nature, from whence it springs; and it is of the highest importance to be guarded against it. Of all kinds of boasting, there is none produces a more loathsome odium than a person's boasting of his religion.

The apostle mentions falsehood as a further fruit of this unhappy earthly and sensual religion. *Lie not against the truth*. Lying is a base vice, but never more so, than when it falls from the lips of high professors, or is accompanied with the appearances of great sanctity.

Having thus described the religion that is from beneath, the inspired penman proceeds to direct our attention to another sort of wisdom in the words of our text. *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy*.

The term wisdom, in scripture, is frequently used to express precisely the same thing that we mean by religion. This is generally the use of it in the Proverbs of Solomon, and in his other writ-

ings. The psalmist employs it for the same purpose when he says, *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom*; that we may devote ourselves to the study and practice of true religion.—This is the evident sense of it in this chapter, and especially in this verse before us. The reason, perhaps, why the inspired writers chose so often to express religion by the word wisdom was, because real religion or piety consists greatly in knowledge, discretion, and prudence, which are the eminent constituents of what we commonly call wisdom. Knowledge is so essential a part of religion, that it is said, *They who know God are born of him*; and, *Those who know Jesus Christ have life eternal*. Mere knowledge is not sufficient of itself to constitute wisdom without prudence and discretion also. It is not every knowing man that is a wise man. It is not enough for a man to have a large share of religious knowledge in speculation, but he must be able, and actually make a right improvement and application of his knowledge, in order either to be truly wise or good. A person must not merely be acquainted in theory with the character of God, the nature of his government, the fall and sinfulness of man, the method of salvation by a glorious Redeemer, &c. but the knowledge of these things must have a suitable influence upon his heart and life, so that his temper, disposition, and practice are reduced to the obedience of the gospel. When his knowledge is directed by prudence and discretion, in

such a manner, whereby he becomes employed in holy exercises and holy duties, then may he be properly denominated wise or religious. *Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.* Indeed, none in a scriptural sense, can be deemed truly wise or knowing, who have not acquainted themselves with God—who have not known and felt their deplorable state by nature and practice—who have not cordially acquiesced in the plan of salvation, revealed in the gospel, and devoted themselves to godly contemplations, and to the works of righteousness. All the knowledge, besides this, which the world styles wisdom, is foolishness with God.

Having mentioned these few things to manifest that the term wisdom, in our text, expresses the same idea with the phrase true religion, I shall now proceed to consider its origin and fruits, as they are here exhibited before us.

First, we are here taught, that true religion is from above. It is of a heavenly and divine original; it cometh down from the Father of Lights. All who are sanctified are said to be the workmanship of God, whose glorious and principle dwelling is in the heavens. Christ Jesus, the great author of religion, came down from above. The Holy Ghost, the comforter and sanctifier of all that believe, descendeth from on high. The oracles of truth—the words of eternal life—the law and the

gospel are likewise from the same source: Holy men, by the inspired influences of heaven, were moved to write and speak those things. When God is pleased to make effectual application of his word or providences to the awakening and conversion of a soul, this precious grace descends from above. Thus all wisdom, religion, grace, and goodness are of a heavenly and divine original; and that, which is from any other fountain, is not that religion or wisdom which will save the soul. Hence it is said, *The Lord giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.* But this being a thing generally allowed, that all true religion proceeds from God, or descends from above, I would not spend time in laboring this point, but proceed to consider its nature and fruits, as here described.

We have it represented to our view in eight branches or particulars; a shining groupe of constituents. All the heathen writers combined could not produce such a constellation of virtues. He, who laboriously cons their mighty works, will nowhere find such a collection; and when he has turned over and spread abroad their mountains of rubbish, no such beautiful gems strike his eager sight! Attend to the divine description. It is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy, good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

The first constituent or branch of true religion, or that wisdom which is from above, is *purity.* It

is first pure, without any undue mixture of maxims or aims that would debase it—it is free from gross iniquities or moral defilements—not allowing habitually of any known sin, but studious of virtue and holiness, in all manner of conversation. The original word, which is here rendered *pure*, signifies also *chaste* and *modest*; therefore this term expresses a sweet, modest, decent, chaste, and pure deportment, arising from right principles and proper views. When true religion is here characterized as *pure*, we must not from hence conceive that a religious person is instantly made *perfect*, that he feels no more the motions of corrupt inclinations and affections, and is no longer guilty of sin, but only that he receives a pure principle or bias, whereby he is enabled to check his evil propensities, to govern and restrain his corruptions, so that sin hath no longer that dominion over him which it formerly held. This principle, received in regeneration, tends to fill the soul with desires after, and will at last issue in, perfection. Some may here refer to the interrogation of the royal preacher, saying, *Who can say my heart is clean? I am pure from my sin?* It is a sad and humiliating truth, there is none doth good perfectly, no not one—there are none whose hearts or lives are completely clean or perfectly free from sin, yet through the boundless riches of divine grace, there are many who can rejoice in God, who giveth them the victory over their corruptions, and enables them to foil their spiritual adversaries. As none ought to carry their

opinions of religious purity to so great a height as perfection in this life, on the other hand, every one may easily observe, that there is something more intended hereby than a bare abstinence from the outward and gross acts of criminal sensuality. There is more meant than an unimpeached character or a fair external behavior before men. Men may be, and often are outwardly orderly and regular in their carriage, and yet possess no real and vital piety.—Our Lord speaks of some who had this beautiful and ornamented conduct, that were the reverse of sincerity and purity. He represents them under the strong figure of *whited sepulchres, which appear beautiful outwardly, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness*. Wherefore they, who are the subjects of this purity which descendeth from above, are first made pure in heart. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God; blessed are the undefiled in the way, &c.* These look upon all intemperance, injustice, dishonesty, and sensuality as forbidden by God, warring against the soul, condemned by the gospel of Christ Jesus, and standing in arrayed opposition against their eternal interest. The fear of God, love to the precious Redeemer, a pleasure and delight in propriety, integrity and uprightness, lead them to hate evil. A fixed aversion of the soul from iniquity, is a cardinal constituent of true purity. The hearts, the thoughts, and inclinations of the careless and secure, are entirely disposed to sinful pleasures, and sensual gratifications. They are governed by pride, am-

bition, covetousness, custom, inconsideration, vanity, or some base lust or other. Hearken to St. Peter's declaration, *Their eyes are full of adultery, and they cannot cease from sin.* Or shall we go farther back into antiquity and retail the account found there; *Every imagination of the thoughts of their heart is only evil continually.* But when true religion enters the soul, and takes possession of it, another turn to the temper, bias and disposition is given. The thoughts and inclinations of the heart become now prevailingly fixed upon God and divine things, upon the honor of Jesus, the advancement of his kingdom, and their own immortal interests. The breathings of the new-born soul are, *Lord, create in me a clean heart, and make me of pure hands.* They are now full of holy purposes, desires, and wishes. They long for the entire mortification of the deeds of the flesh, to yield themselves up soul and body to the service of God, and to be holy and perfect as he is holy and perfect. The heart being thus initiated into purity by the incorruptable seed of divine principles sown from above, true religion will then display itself in a purity of life, by avoiding those things, which may dishonor God, wound the conscience, or injure the sacred cause of real piety. Its votaries will avoid, as far as possible, all loose, profane, and vicious company. They will not take the abandoned, and notoriously wicked for their chosen companions. They will hate the stains on the forehead, and the garments spotted by the flesh.

They will be governed by a dictate of common sense, arising from the gleam of nature's light, when the same is adopted and confirmed by divine counsel, knowing by experience, *That evil communication corrupts good manners.* Intemperate passions, inordinate appetites, they will diligently guard against. Drunkenness, with all its beastly train, they will carefully shun. The exhortation of our Saviour, with a sweet and an abiding influence, rests upon their minds. *Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness.* The impurity of revelling, rioting; the baseness of chambering, and wanton looks, wanton hints, words and behaviour, must not put the present theme of modesty and chastity to the blush. Every thing which wears the aspect of uncleanness, dishonor, dishonesty and unrighteousness, will be objects of their peculiar detestation. A ribaldry of conversation will be the abhorrence of their souls; they will not indulge themselves in filthy communication or filthy speaking, nor will they patiently bear it in others. Railing, whispering, backbiting, reviling and slandering, wound their pure feelings. They cannot allow their own tongues this unkind and unchristian latitude, and their souls are often pained with such ebullitions from the mouths of others. Their desire is so pure, that they would wish to speak evil of none; and when they are called by authority, or a just occasion, it is with uneasiness they undertake the disagreeable task. Your talking,

glorying, boasting, fault-finding professors, who deal around them an unbridled tongue in rash judgings, censures, obloquy, pious hints, religious innuendos, lamentable reports, and ear-whispered dirty tales, are base Christians, and nuisances in society, both civil and ecclesiastical. They are the reverse of that modesty, purity and chastity, here so beautifully recommended. The constituent branch, the essential nature, or the first fruit of true religion, or the wisdom which descends from above is, that it is *pure*. Wherefore, *having great and precious promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit: Cleanse your hands ye sinners, and purify your hearts ye double-minded.*

The second line in this beautiful picture of true religion is, that it is *peaceable*. First pure, then peaceable. Peace follows after spiritual purity, stands connected with it, and depends upon it. Those who are truly wise, will endeavor to preserve peace where it exists, restore it where it is broken, and recover it where it is lost. Peace, how charming, how entertaining, and captivating to the pure mind! In families, neighborhoods and societies, where this heavenly wisdom governs men, it renders them peaceable. The distinguished features of a truly religious man are, that he is peaceable, and a peace-maker; he loves peace; peace is his atmosphere; he dwells in peace; and the benign rays of peace flow from him as beams from the sun. Our exalted Mediator, styled the

wisdom of the Father, is called our peace. An honorable branch of the name of the Most High is, that he is the God of peace. True peace is the purchase of Christ Jesus, and an effect of the operation of the spirit of grace. The great design of heaven, in the whole scheme of our redemption, was to accomplish and promote peace; peace between an offended God and offending man; peace of conscience; and peace between the children of men. The great blessedness of the celestial state is, that all is harmonious, tranquil and peaceable there. We are commanded, *as far as possible, to live peaceably with all men. Follow peace and holiness without which no man can see the Lord.* The truly religious are not addicted to strifes and contentions; they do not indulge boisterous passions and furious heats; they are peaceable, being governed by the religion of peace. They neither offer wrong to others, nor bitterly revenge wrong when offered to themselves. They know it to be their wisdom to be harmless and innocent; when they are reviled not to revile again; not to return railing for railing. They have made their peace with God by faith in Christ Jesus—They preserve peace of mind in a diligent discharge of all Christian duties; and endeavor to keep a conscience void of offence. They promote peace among their fellow-men; maintain it in their families, cultivate it in their neighborhoods; and the establishment of it in church and state, affords them the highest pleasure. They are opposed to schisms, rents and divisions.

They well know that *Cain*, who separated himself, and went out from the presence of God, had a mark set upon him: as also those mentioned by St. Jude, who separated themselves, were branded with being *sensual, not having the spirit*. They attend to the commandments of heaven, which require them *to mark those who cause divisions*. The pious are not only peaceable themselves, but they will be striving to be peace-makers, in order that they may be partakers of the blessings, and interested in the promises of Christ, when he says, *blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God*. From these things, it is manifest, that all are far from true wisdom, who love to live in differences, and cherish contentions; who prefer throwing oil into a flame rather than water. Many seem as if they cared not whether church or state, or society prospered, or was destroyed, provided their corrupt humors might have room to display themselves and be gratified. But, how far is this temper from the religion which is from above!

Thirdly, This heavenly wisdom is gentle. The term gentle signifies patient, easy, moderate. It is rendered moderation—Phil. iv. 5. *Let your moderation be known to all men*. It is translated patient, 1 Tim. iii. 3. It disposes men to treat others with kindness, openness and candor; to bear with their infirmities; to pass over many injuries as if unnoticed; to forgive offences; and to interpret all things for the best. It is a sweet, equal and

placid spirit. Gentleness stands in opposition to harshness, severity, cruelty, incivility and acrimony. To be gentle, is not to stand upon the extremity of right, not to be punctiliously rigorous in fractions of property, not censorious in judging, not furious in opinion, not rude or overbearing in conversation. He, who is governed by this gentle and heavenly religion, will be fair, calm and equal. He will not kindle into a flame about the precise and perfect boundaries of righteousness with those with whom he has dealings; he will yield in doubtful and smaller matters, and recede in some things from what he imagines his right, for the sake of love and peace. Virtue and vice stand strongly and eternally distinguished one from another, yet the exact time of separation cannot certainly be determined in a thousand instances. Virtue and vice in this respect may be compared to the colors of the rainbow, which are strikingly discriminated, yet to fix the perfect line of distinction between color and color, or mark where the one color ends and the other begins, is impossible to the keenest eye, and the most accurate observer. We are commanded *not to be righteous overmuch*. The truly gentle man will be avoiding bitter, unnecessary and rigorous censures. He will be putting the most candid, charitable and favorable constructions upon the foibles and weaknesses of others that they will possibly bear. Gentleness, like charity, hopeth all things, believeth all things, and covereth a multitude of failings. Where differences in senti-

ments take place, he will not wilfully urge his own opinions beyond their weight, nor wrest his adversary's beyond their intention. He will carefully shun, as far as possible, all vain disputings and wranglings. He will not set himself as the standard of rectitude and perfection, engrossing all conversation where he comes, and deciding as a mighty judge in every matter. He is rather ready to let his moderation and gentleness be known to all, in all things; patiently and sweetly instructing them who oppose themselves, and receiving with all tenderness the weak in faith, tho' not to doubtful disputations. Wherefore let us all put on the ornament of a meek, quiet, patient, moderate and gentle spirit. *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*

Fourthly, the wisdom which is from above is *easy to be entreated*. It is of an ingenuous facility, and disposes the subject of it to be readily persuaded or prevailed upon to forsake that which is evil and to follow that which is good. It is true, there is an easiness and persuasibleness which is culpable and base, but it is not a blamable pliability to yield ourselves to the persuasions of divine truth, and to the just desires and reasonable requests of our fellow-creatures. Many are so self-willed, obstinate and perverse, that they will not relinquish their purpose, when others around them imagine that they must, and do feel the glaring conviction. *A fool in his own conceit is wiser than seven*

men who can render a reason. But all those whose hearts have been rendered docile, tractable, and easy to be entreated by divine grace, are of a very different temper. Although they are determinately fixed in their aversion from that which is sinful, yet they are easily entreated to receive divine truth, and readily submit to their duty. The unjust judge himself was recommended, in a sort, by our Lord, for his being won by the widow's importunity. The religious will easily yield to the entreaties of others when better reason is discovered. Job would not despise the counsel of his servant—Moses was persuaded by the advice of Jethro—and David was prevailed upon by the entreaties of a woman. Many, after sufficient conviction of what is right is administered to them, will not drop their purpose, but either with a sulky obstinacy, or an outrageous fury, adhere to their assertions. But those who are made wise from on high, are not self-willed, but easily entreated.

Fifthly, the wisdom which is from above is full of mercy. The truly pious are disposed to everything that is kind, benevolent, charitable, and good; feel compassion for the miserable—inclined to relieve those that want, and to forgive those who offend. Some are ready to apprehend clemency a disgrace, as if it argued men void of fortitude and spirit; but in the divine judgment it is quite the reverse; *It is the glory of a man to pass over a transgression!* It is Christianity to pardon and for-

give, but it is grossly wicked to be malicious and revengeful. The religious man will feel a tender compassion for transgressors, easily pass over and forgive offences offered to him. He thinks of his own innumerable trespasses against God, for which he hopes for compassion and forgiveness, and that it would be enormously cruel in him, not to forgive the little trespasses of his brethren of mankind. A Christian sympathy arises in his soul, when he beholds objects of distress. At seasons he enters into the feelings, pains, and sickness of the afflicted. He does not avoid the chambers of anguish. He submits to the force of this divine counsel; *To him that is afflicted pity should be shewed from his friend.* In a special manner, when he perceives any poor or in want, he will not be over inquisitive how they came into such circumstances, but his soul will be drawn out to deal his bread to the hungry, according to his ability and their necessity. *Who so hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?* He who is wise to salvation knows, on the one hand, the benediction which Christ pronounced—*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy;* and on the other, he trembles at the denunciation of our apostle—*They shall have judgment without mercy, who have shewed no mercy.* Therefore, my brethren, let us be all attention to the exhortation of St. Paul to the Colossians—*As the elect of God, put on bowels of mercy.*

The *sixth* constituent of true religion is, that it is *full of good fruits. Full of mercy and good fruits.*—The description rises upon us. Religion is not a barren tree, but brings forth in abundance; and the fruits which it produces are good; such as promote the glory of God, and the highest interest and happiness of man. *Herein, saith our Lord to his followers, is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples.* By good fruits are undoubtedly meant all the outward duties of piety and righteousness which we owe to God and our neighbor. Thus religion will always produce morality and good works. In vain we make a show of religion and hope for the blessings of it without good morals. Good works are essential to true religion in all adult persons. The latter cannot exist without the former. *Let your light so shine before men, that others, seeing your good works, may be induced to glorify their Father which is in heaven.* This is the great end of their renovation or conversion: *They are the workmanship of God, created unto good works.* This was a principal design of Christ's coming into the world—of his humiliation and passion, that *he should purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* Hence it is absolutely certain, that the subjects of this heavenly religion must be, in some considerable measure, habitually adorned with good fruits.

A *seventh* property of this excellent wisdom is, that it is *without partiality.* The Greek term sig-

nifies being without a partial, wrangling, suspicious, judging temper; so that there is no English word fully expressive of the original. The really pious will not be guilty of base wrangling, undue surmises, or unreasonable suspicions; they will not be given to hasty or partial judging, respecting persons, through outward splendor or party affection. They are not such as those described by St. Jude, *who have men's persons in admiration because of advantage.* They do not suspiciously enquire into the faults of others, nor deal partially among men. They esteem and treat every one according to his apprehended worth, and carry themselves superior to the mean spirit of partiality, uncandid conjecture, and destructive censoriousness. Uprightness, integrity, candor, and honor attend them in all their commerce with mankind. But,

Eightly, The last branch of this beautiful delineation of true religion is, that it is *without hypocrisy.* It wears no mask, disguise or deceitfulness. Those managements and practices which the world count wise, consisting in craft and guile, it cannot away with. It is sincere, open, steady, and uniform and consistent with itself. Carnal men oftentimes pretend to be what they are not; and many of them for strange purposes will pretend to be religious, but they cannot possibly hold out, or act uniformly to the end; and when the irregularity of their conduct flashes the conviction of absurdity and inconsistency upon them, they will sometimes

drop the mask and appear what they always really were. But the truly good man's principal care is, to be what he seems—The desires of his heart are to be devoted to God in Christ in sincerity—to walk in duty with a true mind, and to do the things which are honest in the sight of all men. He intends not, by a profession of Christianity, to impose upon God, the church, or mankind. His love to God and his neighbor is without dissimulation, abhorring that which is evil, and cleaving to that which is good. Honesty and faithfulness dwell with him. Chicanery, cunning, tricking, and artfulness enter not into his habitation. An undisssembled sincerity marks all his conduct, and shines in all his conversation. The pure breathings of their hearts are, to be able to say with the great doctor of the Gentiles, *Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.*—Let us see that we have *that faith which is unfeigned, and love not only in word and tongue, but in deed and in truth.*

I proceed to close this subject with a very brief improvement.

1. It must awaken in every mind sentiments of sorrow and lamentation. Alas! if these things be so, how small the number of the truly pious or good! How few, how very few can the most ex-

tensive charity observe, who are *first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy!* May we not justly take up the lamentation of the weeping prophet, and say, *O that our head were waters, and our eyes a fountain of tears, that we might weep day and night, over the slain of the daughter of our people; over decayed love, loose morals, and wasted religion!* Is it not a melancholy truth, that many in all the assemblies of our people are treacherous men; they bend their tongues like their bow for lies; they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and know not me, saith the Lord? What serious mind, without pain, can contemplate mankind, and behold one wallowing in all impurities, another governed by angry and peace-destroying passions; one addicted to knavery and dishonesty; a second outraging the sacred laws of truth; a third indulging himself in gross intemperance; a fourth belching out torrents of profanity, &c. Tears ran down the Psalmist's eyes when he beheld men transgressing God's law. How should true Christians mourn over the abominations which every where, almost, abound in these days of degeneracy!

2. This doctrine naturally leads us to examine and try ourselves, whether we possess that wisdom which comes down from above, or whether we are the subjects of true religion as described in the divine oracles. God has issued this injunction, *Try*

your own selves. Wherefore, let us bring ourselves to this touchstone of sincerity. Of what sort is our religion? Is it the *wisdom* from beneath, which is *earthly, sensual, devilish, full of envy, malice, confusion, and every evil work?* Or, is it the *wisdom that descendeth from above, that is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.* Our Saviour affirms, *The tree is known by his fruits.* What fruits does our religion produce? Let us solemnly bring ourselves to this doctrine, as to a criterion, by which we may learn our real state and character.

Are we *pure*? Are our hearts purified by divine grace? Are we opposed in heart to sin, and do we abhor all moral defilements? Do we avoid evil company, vicious conversation, and prohibited indulgences? Do we delight in God; meditate on things holy and spiritual; striving to keep our minds pure and pious? Is Christ Jesus, and the way of salvation through faith in his blood precious to us?

Are we *peaceable*? Cultivating peace with God; following the things which make for peace among mankind; maintaining peace in our consciences, families, neighborhood and church? Do we avoid wrath, angry disputations and contention?

Are we *gentle*? Are we moderate, patient, meek, modest, harmless and inoffensive?

Are we *easy to be entreated*? Easily persuaded to that which is rational, decent, just and proper? Are we readily induced to forsake that which is wrong, and to practice that which is good?

Are we *full of mercy*? Tender, kind, and compassionate? Ready to forgive those that offend, to pity the wicked, feel for the distressed, and relieve the poor and miserable?

Are we full of *good fruits*? Do we make it an object of our attention to do good to all as we have opportunity? Are we diligent and careful in the performance of duty towards God and man? Are we doing justly, loving righteousness and practicing *strict* honesty? Are we rich in good works, and do others seeing our works glorify God?

Are we *without partiality*? Are we free from groundless suspicions, evil surmisings, rash judgments, underhand dealings, sinister and partial decisions? When we are called to speak or act, do we perform our duty without favor or affection?

Are we all this, *without hypocrisy*? Are we what we seem to be, or what we profess and pretend? Are we, as far as we know our own hearts, unfeigned and sincere in all our conduct before God and man?

What matter do these reflections afford for humiliation, repentance and amendment? Those who

have ground of hope towards God, let them be quickened to increase in every Christian virtue, and in every branch of piety. *Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* Let hypocrites drop their masks, and impure sinners awake to consideration. *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*



17. The first of the month of May

At the first of the month of May
the weather was very warm
and the wind was from the south
the sun was shining brightly
and the water was very warm
the fish were all out of the water
and the birds were all singing
the children were all playing
and the old people were all
talking of the good old days

The second of the month of May
the weather was very warm
and the wind was from the south
the sun was shining brightly
and the water was very warm
the fish were all out of the water
and the birds were all singing
the children were all playing
and the old people were all
talking of the good old days

The third of the month of May
the weather was very warm
and the wind was from the south
the sun was shining brightly
and the water was very warm
the fish were all out of the water
and the birds were all singing
the children were all playing
and the old people were all
talking of the good old days

The fourth of the month of May
the weather was very warm
and the wind was from the south
the sun was shining brightly
and the water was very warm
the fish were all out of the water
and the birds were all singing
the children were all playing
and the old people were all
talking of the good old days

The fifth of the month of May
the weather was very warm
and the wind was from the south
the sun was shining brightly
and the water was very warm
the fish were all out of the water
and the birds were all singing
the children were all playing
and the old people were all
talking of the good old days

The sixth of the month of May
the weather was very warm
and the wind was from the south
the sun was shining brightly
and the water was very warm
the fish were all out of the water
and the birds were all singing
the children were all playing
and the old people were all
talking of the good old days

S E R M O N XLIV.

C H R I S T I A N U N I O N.

B Y

J A M E S D A N A, D. D.

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EPHESIANS iv. 3—6.

Endeavoring to keep the unity of the SPIRIT in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one SPIRIT, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one LORD, one faith, one baptism; one GOD and FATHER of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

WE shall consider, *First*, The union recommended in these verses. *Secondly*, The various considerations which are used to enforce it.

First, Of the union itself. *Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.*

In the two preceding verses, the apostle beseecheth the professors of Christianity to *walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.* The unity of the spirit is, therefore,

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kept by meekness, forbearance, humility and love among professors: It is kept in the bond of peace. Their conversation is as becometh the gospel, when they stand fast in one spirit—are like-minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus, and with one mind and one mouth glorify God.

With a view to this object, the unity of the spirit, the apostle saith, *We that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. The true members of it follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.* They who have the most improved knowledge of Christianity, the justest sentiments of Christian liberty, should walk charitably towards their brethren who are weak in the faith, and would be stumbled or offended were an unrestrained use of Christian liberty insisted on, or an unreserved declaration made of religious opinions, well known to be true from the best information. Our Lord postponed saying many things to his apostles, because they could not bear them. For the same reason St. Paul directs, *Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God. Let not your good be evil spoken of.* Christian charity dictates much condescension to the infirmities of our brethren, who, from education or otherwise, are not in a present capacity to receive some particular truths. Neither should the weak allow themselves to judge

and censure the strong, who stand or fall to their own master. It is no excuse for an uncharitable judgment, that such judges are not well informed. Persecutors are seldom, if ever, well informed. Will their ignorance warrant persecution? The head of the church hath taught us to judge others by their fruits, not by the inward persuasion of their minds. In respect of the latter there will always be a difference. This difference may consist with equal capacity and integrity on both sides, and equal care to exhibit the fruits of Christianity, of which charity is the greatest.

Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. This is the unalienable right and duty of every Christian. Certainly then they may be differently persuaded. Notwithstanding this difference, they must keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. This they will do, if they are meek and lowly, and possess Christian charity. The unity of the spirit, therefore, doth not mean unity of opinion. Religion is a reasonable service: It is founded in personal persuasion. Our own opinion, not another's, must govern our own profession and actions. This is the equal and common privilege of all Christians: The exercise of it should not destroy or impair Christian charity. It is a material branch of charity, to entertain candid sentiments of different denominations; to believe that they may have the presence of Christ as well as we. They may be best edified in their form

of worship, we in ours. What the apostle exhorts to is, union in *affection*, in endeavors to promote the *spirit* of Christianity; not uniformity of outward profession; not perfect agreement in sentiment. This is impossible, men's minds being differently formed, there being such variety in their temper, education and circumstances. Christian charity doth all things to edification. The best proficient in Christianity say, with our apostle, *All things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.* He would not eat in an idol's temple, lest he should wound and defile the conscience of a weak brother. *Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.* Actuated by this spirit of condescension and love, Christian pastors will *make themselves servants to all that they may gain the more.* To the weak they will become as weak, that they might gain the weak. They will adopt no mode of public teaching, which doth not, cannot edify; but will rather speak to the edification of a Christian assembly, than gratify a fondness for unintelligible disquisitions. Jesus came to preach the gospel to the poor. He said, *If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine.* A religion which cannot be understood by every upright mind, cannot be the religion of Christ, who was *anointed to preach good tidings to the meek.* A religion which contracts and imbitters

the temper, cannot be his who came to preach peace and good will to men.

The union which we are considering is that which the spirit of Christ inspires, which especially subsists among his disciples, and which distinguished the primitive believers, who *were of one heart, and of one soul.* *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.* It is the same as the apostle's faith of charity, which *suffereth long, and is kind, envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; but hopeth all things, endureth all things.* Charity edifieth—it covereth a multitude of sins. Thus is the unity of the spirit kept in the bond of peace. The descent of the spirit on Jesus in the form of a dove, was an emblem of the spirit of his religion—an instruction to his followers to be harmless as doves. If, therefore, there be any consolation in Christ, any comfort of love, any fellowship of the spirit, any bowels and mercies. If professors have the same love, being of one accord, of one mind, nothing will be done through strife, or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind; they will esteem others better than themselves, being kindly affectioned, and with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another; looking not every one on his own things, but every one on the things of others. This is the mind which was in Christ Jesus—this the union whereby those, who call on his name, walk worthy of their vocation.

Were Christian union no other than that which takes place among those who happen to think alike on religious subjects, such was the union among the Pharisees. Christians should consider each one his own mistakes and prejudices; that others have equal right, and may have as good reason to differ from him as he from them; that errors in judgment are consistent with integrity of heart. The apostles of our Lord, of whom he said, *ye are clean through the word I have spoken unto you*, did not apprehend, at that time, that he must die a sacrifice for sin. They supposed that the Jewish ritual must be incorporated with Christianity, and that circumcision must first prepare the Gentiles for admission into the Christian church. The spirit afterwards guided them into the knowledge of truths, which they could not admit during Christ's personal ministry. Hence his ministers and disciples should imitate the maxims of condescension and prudence, on which their master proceeded, would they keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. *Him that is weak in the faith receive ye. Follow after the things wherewith one may edify another.*

“But must we, for the sake of *peace*, sacrifice the *truth*? Is *union* to be kept with such as are not sound in the *faith*?” We answer, if any Christians suppose their own sentiments are the standard of truth; that all who differ from them must be unsound in the faith; their claim cannot be admitted. To sup-

pose that their creed is fundamental to all, is to say, "We, and we only, are always in the right."

Further, Is the difference between them and others, (whom they do not allow to be Christians) about the *practical* or the *speculative* parts of religion? The fundamentals, according to our apostle, are faith towards God, as propitious through a Mediator; repentance from dead works; the admission of Christianity, upon the confirmation of it by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; joining ourselves to the body of Christ by baptism; the resurrection and judgment. These are differently expressed in the text by the terms one body, and spirit, and hope; one Lord, faith and baptism; one God and Father. Such are *the principles of the doctrine of Christ*. These being laid as the *foundation*, we are to go on to *perfection*—to build up ourselves, and edify one another. Whosoever consents not to these is unsound in the faith. Whosoever consents to them, and doth not contradict them in his life, is fundamentally right. He embraces sound doctrine, according to the scriptures. He may not, therefore, be excluded from our charity. For we can know from the scriptures only what is sound doctrine. Whatever a man's *faith* may be, if not accompanied with love to God and man, his *religion* is vain. These two commandments comprehend the law and prophets, and the whole of Christianity. They who do not cultivate the spirit of love, have abundant reason to suppose,

that their zeal favors more the things of men than those of God. Have they not also much reason to suspect that their faith is wrong, since it doth not work by love? Since they do not give diligence to add to it patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness, and charity which never faileth. Charity will not, except it be on the surest evidence, think and pronounce that others err fundamentally concerning the truth. The best are deficient in charity, and also in faith. A good Christian laments the languor of kind affections to his fellow-men and fellow-disciples, and improves all means for enlivening and improving the flame of love. He also laments the weakness of his faith, his mental darkness and prejudices, and prays, *Lord help my unbelief—increase my faith.* We should earnestly contend for the faith as it is delivered to us in the sacred scriptures, *the pillar and ground of truth.* We should stand fast also in the liberty of private judgment, walking charitably in the exercise of it. We should compare spiritual things with spiritual, and allow our brethren to do so, not judging their liberty by our conscience. Or if they thus judge us, shall we imitate this exceptionable part of their character? Let us rather suppose that they may be Christians notwithstanding, and thus *shew unto them the more excellent way.*

That is truth which the spirit hath declared to be so in the sacred scriptures. And every Christian must determine for himself what the sense

sense of the scriptures is, by comparing one part with another, and using all the best helps to direct his judgment. To extend or deny our charity to others, according as they admit or reject our construction of the scriptures, is no mark that we are impartial enquirers after truth. If the unity of the spirit depends on unity of opinions, there can be none on earth. The apostle might as well have exhorted us to be angels as to keep the unity of the spirit in this sense. Christians may have respectful sentiments of each other, and have fellowship with one another, as having obtained like precious faith: They may love as brethren, and unite their endeavors for the advancement of the cause of their common Lord: They may be agreed in the vital parts of religion, consistently with great variety of opinion in regard to the form, and in the explication of some doctrinal points: They may be agreed, that there is one body, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all: They may be actuated by one spirit, and have one hope. If agreed thus far, what hinders their keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace?

This reminds us, *secondly*, of the various considerations wherewith the gospel enforceth Christian union.

The first is, *There is one body*. The Christian church is compared to the natural body. The head of the body is Christ. Professors stand in a similar relation to him, and to each other, as the members

of the body to the head, and to one another. *As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ.* Every real disciple of Christ is a part of this body, whatever his talents, education or rank in life, of whatever nation, or whatever class of professing Christians. Some would confine the church or body of Christ to such as embrace their sentiments. But in the exercise of Christian humility and love, they would not restrain wisdom and grace to themselves. Is this the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace?

In the natural body, the most feeble and least honorable members are necessary. *The foot may not say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body. The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor the head to the feet, I have no need of you.* In the natural body, *if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.* So we being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. The whole church through the world needs the gifts, encouragement and support of all the numerous parts, into which, for mutual convenience or edification it is divided; while different denominations need the countenance of each other, and the whole collective body of Christ. Particular professors also of each denomination have occasion for the concurring aid of the communion to which they belong, and of all, whether of the same or a

different communion, wherever dispersed, that the gospel may have free course. The goodness of the author of nature appears in the variety, dependence and subordination of the parts of the human body; in the connexion, proportion and harmony of the whole. The goodness of the head of the church appears in the rank and endowments of its officers and members. The gifts and graces of all the various parts, and of each individual, operating together, the church will appear in health and beauty. No part is self-sufficient, nor may conduct towards the other parts, or the whole, as though it had no dependance or connexion. Every part, and every member, should consider its relation and obligations to other parts and members, and aim to edify and be edified by them. Collected strength will best defend the body of Christ against the common enemy. Do professors agree in this, that the body of Christ is one? Then let all the members lay themselves out to edify and increase it. No man ever yet hated his own flesh. Is there any more reason for hatred among the members of the Christian church? Doth every man nourish and cherish his own flesh? And should not the members of Christ's body, of his flesh and bones, by love serve one another, considering their common profession as a relation like that of affinity or blood? The partial regards shewn by different societies of Christians to their own communion, their zeal to propagate their own sentiments and way of worship, to the neglect of

our common Christianity, favors somewhat of Judas's care for the poor. To such as think it a waste of the precious ointment to attend to the common interest of Christianity, supposing every thing lost which doth not immediately advance their own communion, the words of Christ are applicable: *Ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will, ye may do them good: But me ye have not always.*

Again: *There is one spirit*—the guide, sanctifier and comforter, in whom all real Christians believe. *The love of the spirit* is a farther reason for Christian union. *For by one spirit have we all been baptized into one body.* This is the spirit by which we all have access to the Father, the spirit which helpeth our infirmity; by which we are strengthened with might in the inner man, and rooted and grounded in love; to which we owe our heavenly birth; which witnesseth with our spirit that we are children of God; through which we wait for the hope of righteousness by faith; and the fruit of which is in all righteousness and goodness. Divers are the gifts of the same spirit. Being agreed in our belief in the eternal spirit, one of the sacred three, shall we not keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace?

Again: *We are called in one hope*—the hope of an inheritance in that world where they are made perfect in love. That we have all the same hope of a better resurrection, is a forcible motive to be of

one heart and soul, and live in peace. If the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts; if we have the first-fruits of the spirit, and wait for the adoption, the redemption of the body, shall we not rejoice in the gifts, reputation and influence of all who have the same hope? Shall we not assist them in the Christian life, and be thankful for their assistance? Shall we not unite our endeavors with theirs for the furtherance of the gospel which brings life and immortality to light? Are we fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of the same promises, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ? Let us endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

To proceed: *There is one Lord*—even Christ, whom all professors agree to call their Lord and master. He is the head of the body. The members are complete in him. In him dwelleth all fulness. Thus far all are agreed. It should then be the concern of all to keep united to him, and *grow up into him in all things, from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love.* It is of like moment, therefore, that the members have the same care one for another, as that they be united to, and derive constant communications from, their common head. Brotherly love is the best evidence of a vital union and communion with

him. If he is Lord, is there a propriety in exalting any of his servants into his place? Hath he not cautioned, *Call no man master?* Hath he not said, *All ye are brethren?* Shall we then give to any of our brethren the honor which he claims? It would be alike *carnal* on our part to give, and on their part to receive, this honor. It would be a source of envy, strife and divisions, instead of godly edifying. The unity of the spirit in the bond of peace could not be kept. Is there one Lord? One head of the church? Our business is to preach Christ Jesus Lord, not ourselves. What then must we think of the member who would assume the place and prerogatives of the head? Who should undertake to make terms of communion for his fellow-members, give law to them, sit in judgment upon them, and open and shut heaven? Such an one was foretold to arise in the Christian church, who should sit in the temple of God, claiming divine prerogatives. *That man of sin, the son of perdition, hath been revealed, as all protestants suppose. And seeing he opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; seeing also that the Lord shall consume him with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy him with the brightness of his coming,* let protestants beware that they do not assume dominion over the faith of Christ's disciples. It behoves protestant pastors to renounce the spirit as well as superstition of Rome. Not as *being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock—helpers of their joy.*

Further: *There is one faith*—the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he is the author and finisher of our faith. He hath not left in his church authority in matters of faith. Our faith is one; for, in the first place, there is but one sacrifice for sin, one advocate with the Father, one Mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ. There is salvation in no other. The apostle is arguing on the common principles of those who acknowledged his divine mission. No other was crucified for us. No other maketh intercession for transgressors. In no other is God reconciling a lost world to himself. Either Christianity is not a divine revelation, or the redemption in Christ Jesus is the only way of justification. This was revealed to the ancient church. All the promises pointed forward to him. He was ordained before the foundation of the world, to restore our apostate race. The way of salvation hath been but one from the fall till now. Abel by this faith offered to God an excellent sacrifice. Abraham saw Christ's day. The Mosaic institution had patterns of heavenly things. The spirit of Christ was in all the prophets, who testified of his sufferings and glory. The just lived by the same faith, in general, before his coming as since. The Christian dispensation is designed to *gather together in one the children of God*.

Moreover, our faith is one, as the *terms* of salvation are the same for all. These terms are faith and repentance—*faith working by love*; repentance

denoting a *conscience purged from dead works*. In this respect *there is no difference*. All the heirs of salvation have the same spirit of faith. They confide in the promises, which in Christ are yea, and amen, unto the glory of God. They are renewed in the spirit of their mind. They agree in building the same foundation laid in Zion, and in having the same mind which was in Christ Jesus. For *if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his*. There are fundamental truths, wherein all good Christians are agreed. These the text mentions. These are mentioned Hebrews vi. 1, 2. Would you know the foundation principles of Christianity, search the scriptures which were given by inspiration of God.—These contain the *faith delivered to the saints*. Forfaking these, Christ is divided, and the faith of him is no longer one. Forfaking these, our faith doth not stand in the power of God, but in the wisdom of men. If we agree to acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God and Saviour of the world, and that faith and repentance are the terms of salvation, should we not endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace? Can we have saving faith, or true repentance, if we do not *follow after charity*?

Further: *There is one baptism*. We have all been baptized in the same name. Our baptism signifies that we have put off the old man, and put on the new; are dead and risen with Christ. Among the marks of the old man are pride, hatred, vari-

ance, emulations, strife, and whatever is opposed to Christian edification. But they who have put on the new man, are *kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, followers of God as dear children, walking in love, as Christ also loved us.* By baptism we become members of his church. For when he commissioned his apostles, he said, *Go, teach all nations, or make disciples, as the original word imports.* They were to make disciples by baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. If the *disciples* of Jesus are members of his church, then *baptized* persons are. And who are members, if disciples are not? What is the advantage or meaning of baptism, if the subject is not hereby brought into the Christian church? The disciples of Jesus, by the engagements of their baptism, are to observe all things he hath commanded; of which humility and love are chief. Of both these he hath left them the brightest pattern. *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples.* How nearly the interest of Christianity is concerned in the maintainance of this spirit of union and love among its professors, further appears from our Lord's prayer for all who embrace the faith of him. *That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: That the world may believe that thou hast sent me.* Would we, therefore, verify our baptism into Christ, we must keep the unity of the spi-

rit in the bond of peace. *For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body.*

Lastly: *There is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* We have all one father, and are children of the same family, as one God hath created us. We alike live, and move, and have our being in him. The Father of the great family in heaven and earth is not willing that any of his offspring should perish. His compassion to the children of disobedience is represented by that of the father in the parable to his prodigal son. He hath revealed himself as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and love; in whom believers are filled with all the fulness of God. Doubtless he requires the children of his family to dwell together in unity; to imitate the example of their parent. His mercy towards us is great, as the heaven is high above the earth.—Those who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, evidence their divine extraction by *bowels of mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, forbearance, forgiveness and charity.* *Above all things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.* *And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body.*

Thus the apostle's reasoning stands: There is one body, and one spirit, and one hope; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of

all. Therefore keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.*

* Christian condescension perfectly consists with having fixed principles, with holding fast our profession. It differs, therefore, from giving up or disguising religious principles in complaisance to the deniers or contemners of them; from flattering men in error; from complying with their vices. Such is the civility of this world. But the conscience of the real Christian bears witness to his simplicity and godly sincerity. Every consistent Protestant must suppose that his own communion is most conformable to the New Testament: In this view he must prefer it. But must he, therefore, deny the validity of Christian administrations in other communions? Is there in all wise and good men the same knowledge? May they not differ in some points which they respectively judge important? And may they not agree, at the same time, in the spirit of the gospel, the fruits of righteousness, and the faith which worketh by love? Do they say to each other, "Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou art?"—Every doctrine which we embrace, though a Christian doctrine, may not be a part of the foundation. If the teaching or avowal of it, in present circumstances, would be mistaken or ill-improved, disturb the peace of Christ's church, or wound any true Christian, what do we learn from our Lord's instruction and example in such a case? *New wine may not be put into old bottles, nor a new piece of cloth sewed upon an old garment*, as we would not rend either.—Our Lord gradually prepared the minds of men to admit his doctrine. He did not attack prejudicate opinions in a direct and warm manner. He spake much in parables. His reproofs were introduced with the circumspection which the application of disagreeable truths require. Indiscreet modes of explaining some Christian doctrines or offensive terms and expressions, have been an occasion of the most melancholy separations. What schism hath been made in the body of Christ by the attempts of some of his disciples to establish uniformity? By the imposition of rites and ceremonies? By the contention of different denominations for their own peculiar sentiments, as though these were the common doctrine of salvation? What usurpation is this? Zeal is a Christian grace: But let it be according to knowledge; otherwise we fight against God, while we think to do him service. We may not be indifferent or cold in his cause; nor may we offend his children. The further we condescend in things harmless, the greater prospect is there that we may correct any unhappy mistakes of others; and gain them over to the truth. Should we be mistaken in thinking them to be good Christians, will charity be imputed as a fault? Should they be really such, and yet anathematized by us, it had been better that a mill-stone were hung about our neck, and we cast into the sea.

Persons of superior rank, abilities and piety peculiarly promote the Christian improvement of others, by attention to their particular

Impressed with these considerations, the disciples of the blessed Jesus will take much pains for the union and edification of his church, the confirmation of its members, and enlargement of its boundaries. They will rejoice when the universal church prospers, and will lament corruptions and divisions. They wish to promote the spirit of Christianity rather than any one form of profession. For they believe that there may be the power of godliness under different forms.

Particular Christian societies have many opportunities by love to serve one another. A regular discharge of their mutual duties would promote the common cause of the gospel. Being *children of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation*, they would at least cut off occasion from such as seek it, and may be instrumental in turning sinners from the error of their way. Keeping the unity of the spirit, their prayers for the prosperity of Christ's kingdom will be more fervent, and ascend with greater acceptance. The

temper and circumstances, misapprehensions and prejudices. He must be an unskilful pilot, who opposeth the current "when the tide runs high in the channel, instead of coasting it along the shore, which is the shortest and safest way to the point he would gain."

It better becomes us to study the spirit of our religion, to cultivate it in ourselves and promote it in others, than to *bind heavy burdens, and lay them on* our fellow-servants. Those who are as a city on an hill, should be lights in the world. The truth or importance of doctrines in religion must be estimated by their practical influence. Consequently, that system is wrong, which is prejudicial to holiness, peace and love. It is immaterial whether we do or do not see wherein the sophistry lies: Being contrary to holiness we must reject it.

salutary influence of their Christian spirit would spread. By their means the gospel would run and be glorified, while they would experience the pleasure of brethren dwelling together in unity. We may whenever we will, and in various ways, do good to, and receive good from, the body of professors with whom we statedly worship. But if Christian charity be wanting, the nearer our connexion, and the more constant our intercourse, the more prejudicial to our spiritual interests. Being members, not only of the same general body of Christ, but more nearly connected also by the same form of profession, and attending Christian institutions together, the members of particular churches have special advantage to instruct, exhort, watch over, admonish and comfort one another. Churches divided cannot stand, any more than kingdoms or families.

Whenever we meet to record the dying love of our Redeemer, we profess our charity to one another, as well as our faith in him. Hence the sacred supper is called *the COMMUNION of the body and blood of Christ*. Our general temper, and treatment of one another, should therefore be such as will dispose us for fellowship in breaking of bread and prayers. The cross of Christ is designed to slay all enmity, pride and self-sufficiency in man. If these have possession of our hearts when we meet at his table, our *coming together* must be *for the worse, not for the better*. When Christ is set forth as cru-

cified before our eyes, our brotherly love, as well as our love to God and gratitude to the Saviour, should kindle into a flame, which the floods of temptation cannot quench. When we remember how we have been loved, can we love too much? When we remember how much is forgiven us for Christ's sake, can we forgive too much? Shall we be indulgent to our own faults, and severe to the faults of others? Our Lord prayed for them that crucified him, *Father, forgive them.* He made the only plea that could extenuate their sin: *They know not what they do.* Are we conscious to no faults in ourselves? Thou who canst say that thou art sinless, go and judge thy brother.

Have we never discovered, that we have embraced wrong opinions? That time and opportunity, change of situation and circumstances, have changed our views? That we have contradicted ourselves? If we have not made this discovery, we must have been deficient in examining. If we have often found that we have erred, can we make no allowance for others? Or are we sure that they now err more than we do ourselves? *Our* want of charity may be as criminal at least as *their* mistake in judgment. On a change of circumstances we, perhaps, should see as they see. Why then do we marvel, that they do not see as we do?

Good and needful is St. Paul's advice to every professor, *not to think of himself more highly than he ought, but soberly.* Having different talents and

opportunities, let us *consider one another to provoke unto love and good works.* As members of one body, having different offices, let us make no schism in it, either by cutting off others from it, or separating ourselves without cause from other members. So far as any professors do either of these, they *have not the spirit.* Let us build up one another on our most holy faith, keeping ourselves in the love of God, and praying for the peace of Jerusalem. *Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together.*

Extraordinary and ordinary gifts have been bestowed for the edification of the body of Christ, *till we come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.* The redeemed of the Lord, brought to glory, will make up one society with angels who have ministered for their salvation. Behold the blessed society in heaven, each one *made perfect in love.* There Paul and Barnabas have no dissention. The sons of Zebedee incur not the *indignation* of their fellow-apostles by asking for precedence. Christians do not think it reprehensible that their brethren did not follow them. They see how much they were mistaken in attempting to propagate their master's religion by the *sword*, or *calling for fire from heaven* for the purpose. They who might entertain the idea of a pure church on earth, and took pains to separate the tares from the wheat, there at

least know, that it is the province of the omniscient judge to *gather out of his kingdom all things that offend*. Numbers will sit down in that kingdom, while some who would have excluded them, shall be *thrust out*. There *Ephraim doth not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim*. The mutual prejudices, mistakes and offences among different classes, and even among brethren of the same society, on earth, are laid aside in heaven, as the follies and disputes of childhood are when we attain to manhood. Doubtless many will meet in that world of love, on terms of perfect friendship, who cannot worship together in this world; who, perhaps, mutually *shut the kingdom against* each other. That name which distinguished the disciples at Antioch, the only name whereby we must be saved, this name, and not another, will there be celebrated by all the chosen and faithful. *Worthy is the lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory and blessing.* Amen.



S E R M O N X L V .

A CHRISTIAN CHARACTER THE BEST
DEFENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

B Y

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I P E T E R i i i . 1 5 , 1 6 .

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: And be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; Having a good conscience; that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

S T. PETER begins this chapter with particular directions for the conduct of Christian professors in sundry relations. He proceeds to a general exhortation respecting their treatment of one another. *Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous; not rendering evil for evil; but contrariwise, blessing.* To enforce this general and that

more particular advice, he useth the following argument: *For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? Should any be so unreasonable as to persecute them for righteousness' sake, the apostle beseecheth them, be not dismayed by the rage of the persecutor; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: And be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.*

The meaning is not, that Christians should enter on the defence of the principles of their religion, whenever or by whomsoever demanded. They may not cast pearls before swine. They should be always furnished with a satisfactory reason for that hope, which, in case of persecution, will justify them in sacrificing the prospects of life, and life itself. Unbelievers might call it folly and madness to consent to such a sacrifice. Having no hope themselves, they would suppose there could be no possible compensation for the loss of the world. But our faith contains the hope of eternal life, and therefore overcomes the world. Considering the self-denial it requires, we have occasion to be rooted and grounded in the faith, in

love to the truth. The apostle here instructs us, that the best reason we can give of a well-founded hope, is, a temper and conduct formed on the principles, maxims and prospects of Christianity, and the pattern of its author. *Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts—having a good conscience—a good conversation in Christ.* Professors would thus be always able and prepared to make a rational defence of their hope. *This* would be a good answer to every one who might ask a reason of it. Thus the foes to their religion, instead of having matter of accusation against it and them, may approve and venerate both.

Be ready to give an answer to every one that asketh a reason of the hope that is in you. This may be understood, either, *first*, of an enquiry into the general evidences of our religion: Or *secondly*, the grounds of our *own* hope of salvation, admitting the truth of Christianity. These are different enquires. Those who profess Christianity may indulge a false hope: Its truth depends not on the character of its professors. Since then the apostle speaks of such an answer to the enquirer, as will evidence our own hope to be founded on a rock, the words may be a direction how to answer such as ask a reason of our personal hope, grounded on the Christian profession. A satisfactory answer may be given why we suppose the religion of Jesus to be true, while we ourselves hear his sayings, *but do them not*, and therefore, build on the sand. Now

while our own hope is that of the hypocrite, we do not give such *reason of it*, as we are here commanded to give. A Christian character, is the only evidence of that hope, which maketh not ashamed.

What I therefore propose for present discussion is this point, that a Christian character is the best commendation, and defence of the Christian religion.

First, This is the most important evidence to ourselves.

Whatever moral evidence we may have of the truth of Christianity—how well persuaded soever we may be of its truth, speculatively considered, it is of no moment, unless we have found it, in our own experience, *the wisdom of God, and the power of God—unless he hath shined in our heart with the light of the knowledge of his glory in Christ*. Separate from this sanctifying influence of the gospel—this inward witness of its truth, our faith is no other than a barren speculation. *A good conscience* is necessary to our own hope in Christ, if not to our defending, by way of argument, the foundation principles of his religion, and his divine mission. Arguments in defence of Christianity have most force, and appear with best grace, when they come from such as shew, that they believe it themselves, and think it important, by exemplifying the spirit of it. *This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with*

fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have our conversation in the world.

Indeed, a good understanding of the doctrine of Christ, may much depend on men's love to the truth. *When their deeds are evil, they love darkness rather than light. But every one that doth truth, cometh to the light.* This might be one reason of the injunction, *Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.*—Such as thus sanctify him, will probably be better furnished with the evidences of Christianity; better able to give a reason why they believe it. Other things being equal, their knowledge of it and its evidences will be clearer. At least they shall not be left to any fatal mistakes. Whereas those who *receive not the love of the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness, are given over to believe a lie.*

Suppose the religion of Jesus is improved as a means of opening the eyes of the blind, of unstopping the ears of the deaf, of quickening the dead; is not this the just inference, that an institution thus honored and blessed is from heaven? Doth our faith *make the children of wrath, partakers of a divine nature?* Doth it afford the peace *which passeth understanding?* the hope *which is as an anchor to the soul?* From this renovation after the divine image, this peace and hope, may it not be safely concluded; that the gospel, which is the mean of such a change, such joy in believing, such a lively hope; is *the wisdom of God, and the power of God?* If Jesus was not the light of the world, the Christ

of God; who hath delivered them from the power of darkness? Who hath redeemed them from the present evil world? From the power of satan and sin? From the bondage to which they must otherwise have been subjected through fear of death? They could not deliver themselves. The god of this world could not deliver them: He is not divided against himself. If then, their faith overcomes the world, and triumphs in death, the excellency of the power is of God. It is a testimony to the truth of the gospel, that they are made meet for heaven, and account the sufferings of time unworthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed. In the seal of the spirit the Christian hath the earnest of his inheritance above and the best reason for his hope.

Secondly, The Christian character is the best evidence *others* can have that our hope is well-founded.

It comforts and edifies our *fellow-disciples*. They have good reason for their charitable judgment of us when they behold our good conversation in Christ. They rejoice beholding his image in us. We shew them that our religion is not in word, but in power. They glorify God for his grace in us, and are encouraged, strengthened, and quickened by our example. Our Lord hath left his disciples this rule by which to judge professors—*By their fruits ye shall know them*. Times of persecution, such as the primitive, best shew who are

sincere, and who are hypocrites. But the general rule of trial is the same in all times. The *fruits of the spirit* shew the hopes of professors to be well-founded; the *works of the flesh*, shew their foundation to be false. Every grace may, indeed, be counterfeited: But till the counterfeit appears, it must be received as genuine. We shall not be condemned by our judge for the charity which *thinketh no evil*, which *hopeth all things*.

They who fear the Lord, speak often one to another. No doubt their discourse frequently turns on the hope that is in them, and the grounds of that hope. Thus they *take sweet counsel together*.

But the apostle, in exhorting Christians to *be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of their hope*, seems not to have so much in his view the answer they should give to *one another*, as to *unbelievers*; to them that are without.— And he intimates, that a Christian conversation would be this answer.

First, To the candid enquirer, it would be a satisfactory reason.

Secondly, It would silence the scoffer.

Thirdly, It is an answer equally in the power of all sincere professors to give.

First, It must be a satisfactory answer or reason to the *candid* enquirer. Such enquirers admit the principles of natural religion, and are well-wishers

to the cause of morality, and the interests of mankind. I may add, they admit a conviction of human guilt and pollution, and the consequent necessities of our nature. Those who plead for the sufficiency of human reason, must yet acknowledge that sin and misery are in the world, and call for a remedy. To suppose that man was originally created sinful and miserable, consists not with any just notions of his creator, or a moral government. He is, therefore, now in a state of apostacy. And the important question is, Can he be restored? Not a single example can be produced to shew, that he hath light and strength to restore himself. Hath any one discovered by the light of nature that God will forgive? Has any one pointed out a way of forgiveness whereby the guilty and condemned may find rest? Hath any one, by the strength of nature, delivered himself from the pollution and power of sin? The wisest and best in the heathen world knew not God, and were addicted to the grossest forms of idolatry.

But admitting that some conjectures might be made that God would pardon sin, and afford his aid to the sinner; shall such conjectures be compared with a declaration of the way and terms of pardon by a messenger from heaven? Christianity lays claim to be such a declaration. The author of it declared, that he came down from heaven. It is beside our purpose to enquire, how he was approved by a voice from heaven, by his migh-

ty works, by his resurrection, and the powers wherewith he endowed his first disciples. Nor do we urge the propagation and success of the gospel, wherein the foolish confounded the wise, and the weak the mighty. Nor do we mention prophecy, which is the testimony of Jesus, and the fulfilment of which, from age to age, continually supports and strengthens the cause of Christianity. Neither do we mention the internal frame of this religion. These considerations must have much weight with the discerning and candid. But in this place let us only attend to *the good conversation in Christ*, of which the apostle speaks, and which he represents as an answer to such as ask a reason of the hope of Christians. Their master was holy, undefiled and separate from sinners, meek and lowly, intent on the glory of God and good of mankind; when reviled, he reviled not again, but learnt obedience by what he suffered, and sealed the truth of his doctrine with his blood. They have the spirit of Christ, and follow his steps. They are blameless and harmless, children of God without rebuke, and shine as lights in the world. They do good to all, as they have opportunity; are patient in tribulation, stand fast in the Lord, walk in love, and count not life dear, so that they may finish their course with joy. The whole assemblage of Christian virtues may have no beauty to minds overclouded with superstition, or puffed up with pride. But the fair examiner, being of no party, wishing that truth, piety and charity may

prevail, observing the good conversation of the professors of Christianity, their meekness, humility and charity, their patience in well-doing, amidst all temptations and dangers, will think well of their religion, and conclude it came from heaven.

The Christian is not insensible to the enjoyments and sufferings of the world : But he shews a comparative indifference to these, because he hath hope of immortality. Having acquainted himself with God according to the gospel, he holds on his way, through honor and dishonor, whether he abounds or suffers need, and rejoiceth evermore. Let the unbeliever remark his serenity and hope, how he is more than conqueror in all things, displaying the beauty of holiness in every relation and condition—Can the unbeliever suppose that the Christian would thus live above this world, if not endowed with power from on high?—if not guided by divine counsel? If no other than common temptation happens to the Christian, still his heavenly conversation will be a good defence of his faith to all impartial inquirers. That faith is doubtless the best, which hath the best effect on the temper and life. The world can judge only from the fruits of the Christian profession, in different relations and circumstances ; whether those who assume this profession sanctify the Lord God in their hearts. Shall it be once supposed, that the pattern of undissembled piety and universal charity which Jesus exhibited, and which all his true dis-

ciples copy in their measure, could be founded in imposture? It would be unjust to infer, from the bad lives of professing Christians, that their religion is false, unless it could be first shewn, that their lives were no worse than their profession. If neither this, nor the example of its author, countenance such a life, then the hope of those who thus live, hath no support or encouragement from their profession. On the other hand, when the sanctifying influence of the gospel is apparent in all holy conversation, will any candid person, any one who considers what he owes to his own character, calumniate it, or such worthy professors of it? If the real members of this kingdom are distinguished for righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, doubtless the kingdom which Jesus set up is divine, for God loveth righteousness, and hateth wickedness. God is love.

Secondly, A Christian conversation is best adapted to put *scoffers* to silence. If such, walking after their own lusts, will not admit conviction; yet their mouths must be stopped, when they have no evil thing to say of professors; when they can only say of them, that they are Christians. If this be a reproach, let them glory in it; as a pious man of old, whose determined enemies found no occasion against him, *except concerning the law of his God*. In an age when Christianity is set at nought, it behoves its friends to cut off all occasion of offence. This they will best do by imbibing the spirit, and

walking in the steps of their master. This will be a constant reprehension of the scoffer. While he employs ridicule, to shame them out of their religion, he may be put to shame by their exemplary life. At least this is the most probable mean of putting gainfayers to silence. Undissembled piety and goodness command esteem and reverence. The Christian virtues of meekness, patience, forgiveness of injuries, love of enemies, rendering good for evil, are so amiable, that those who have no pretensions to them cannot but commend them in others. By an emulation to display this excellent character, the Christian takes from a foe to religion *all his armor*. Or suppose the foe to be so shameless and hardened; so immersed in sensuality, or so wise in his own eyes, that even such a reason as this, in behalf of the Christian hope, doth not reform or convince. Suppose that the shafts of raillery are still pointed against Christianity, and its friends: In what way can these shafts be avoided or repelled; if not in that of which we speak?—The way which the apostle so earnestly recommends? With this armor, the Christian will stand collected and firm. None of the weapons of the reviler can hurt him. From dissolute manners, or speculative pride, men hate the light. When one cavil is answered, they have others at hand. It fully accounts for their unbelief, that they wish Christianity not true. *But wisdom is justified of her children*. The weapons of their warfare are mighty, and pull down all strong

holds. When the gospel apparently hath this effect, it carries that evidence, which none but an enemy to the truth, to society, and himself, will gainsay.

Hence it greatly concerns all, who assume the Christian name, to wrest from the hand of the infidel the most deadly weapon he hath to destroy our faith; *the vicious lives of professors*. Hereby, Christ is wounded in the house of his friends more deeply, than by all the reproaches of his open enemies. The reproaches of an enemy may be borne; but those of a friend sink deep. Shall then the professed friends of the cross furnish its revilers with matter of reproach? God forbid!

Thirdly, The defence of Christianity, which our subject recommends, is equally in the power of *all* sincere professors. It depends not on great abilities, or any exterior distinction. In this way the learned and ignorant may alike give a reason of their faith and hope. Simplicity and godly sincerity, a conversation, becoming the gospel, is a character which may be possessed indiscriminately by men of high and low degree, of superior or inferior parts, by the rich and poor of this world, by every free-man and every bond-man. They are not all under advantages to make the same improvement in this character; but the reality of it is alike attainable by all ranks and ages. *For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance. Every man is accepted according to that he*

bath. Every one that asketh, receiveth. The apostle's exhortation in the text belongs, therefore, to all who assume the Christian profession. Through the divine influences, which ever accompany the gospel dispensation, they may sanctify the Lord God in their hearts, keep a good conscience, and walk worthy of their holy vocation. Grace is neither restricted to, nor doth follow, distinction of birth, talents, education, or fortune. Are the wise, mighty and noble, and only such, called, and chosen, and faithful? All are alike insufficient of themselves. But God worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure. This is an argument to all to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. The angel said to Gideon, *The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor, go in this thy might.*—This language may be accommodated to the work of our salvation.

The sceptic may throw objections in the way of a sincere Christian, which the latter cannot answer. But if he hath not talents to reply to speculative difficulties, his Christian life is a better defence: It shews that his religion *is the power of God to salvation.* What would the objector more? Would any reasoning, however strong, convince, if this doth not? Suppose you understood all mysteries, and all knowledge, and could speak with the tongue of seraphs; but are destitute of the spirit of Christianity, could you so effectually plead its cause as one whose life adorns it? Could you shew that

your own hope is well-founded? If not, how could you give a reason of your hope? It is a reason of *this* which is asked. Your answer, then, must be such as shall afford the enquirer grounds to believe that you are a real Christian. You must shew him by your example, that Christianity is *the wisdom from above, first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.*

On the whole: The real Christian *bath the witness in himself*, that his religion is true, and therefore rejoiceth in hope. He edifies, comforts, and strengthens his brethren. He satisfies the ingenuous enquirer. He takes the surest method to stop the mouth of calumny. But the formal professor, in proportion to the excellency of the religion he professeth, experiences self-reproaches on account of his opposition to it in heart and life. He can have no other than a fluctuating hope. Winds and storms will shake and overthrow his foundation. He is a stumbling to good men. He tempts the enquirer to suspect the truth of Christianity. He ministers occasion of triumph to the infidel and scoffer. *It must needs be that offences will come; but woe to him, by whom they come.*

Our religion instructs us to be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves; to become all things to all men, so far as integrity will permit. Christian candor, condescension and benignity, meekness of wisdom, patience and forgiveness of injuries, con-

duce to remove prejudices against Christianity, and to give all ranks and characters honorable thoughts of it and its friends. If a temper and conduct so irreprehensible and beneficent, should not exempt either it or them from persecution, still they must hold fast faith and a good conscience. Whatever the opinion or treatment of the world may be, the approbation of God and hope in Christ are to be regarded at any expence. Do those sanctify God in their hearts, who, terrified by the persecutor, swerve finally from the faith? Doubtless the good Christian will persevere. Looking to Jesus who endured the cross, he will not revolt through perturbation of mind; but do and suffer for him, not fearing them that kill the body. Surely then he will stand fast in the Lord, and bring forth fruit with patience, when no such days of tribulation attend his profession. Animated by the example of Christ and hope in him, having experienced the power of his resurrection, being made conformable to his death, temptations will be resisted, whether from inward corruption, or the customs of the world, or the spirits of wickedness in high places. With the advantage of the best rules, the brightest example, exceeding great and precious promises, the real Christian's path shines more and more. *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: For when he is tried he shall receive a crown of life.*

We proceed to the uses of the preceding discourse.

First, Every professor of the gospel, should acquaint himself, according to his ability and opportunity, with the principal evidences of the religion on which his eternal hopes are built. Common Christians have faculties and means to judge in this case. They cannot neglect their faculties and advantages, and be guiltless. The sacred oracles are before them, and exhibit evidence which can be apprehended by men of plain sense. The faith of every Christian should stand in the power of God, not in the wisdom of man. One is our master, even Christ. An effectual way to establish error and tyranny is to demand, *Have any of the rulers believed otherwise?*

Again, In giving a reason of our hope, it behoves us to have particular regard to the apostle's direction. He directs us to do it *with meekness and fear*.

We shall thus express our sense of the nature and importance of Christianity. Its author was meek and lowly. Its cause is the cause of purity, unity and charity. Its disciples are known by their love to one another. They know not what spirit they are of, when they think to propagate their religion by coercion. This is not to answer with meekness and fear: It is not to sanctify the Lord God in our hearts. We may *contend*, yea, we may contend *earnestly*, for the faith delivered to the saints; and yet preserve the spirit of love, humility and condescension, which distinguished the author of our faith. The wrath of man worketh not the

righteousness of God. How hath Christianity been debased by the emulations, separations and enmities of its professors? the warmth of their disputes? the absurd, licentious and impious doctrines for which they have contended? The common cause hath been sacrificed to profelyting zeal—a zeal for peculiar modes and human systems.

The friends of Christianity should endeavor, by their good conversation in Christ, to edify and build up one another; to compel those to come into his church, who believe in him, but neglect to confess him; and to convince unbelievers. The unworthy carriage of communicants is a great hindrance to the free course of the gospel. Their own hope in Christ, his honor, and the spiritual interests of others are nearly concerned in their walking worthy of their vocation. Suppose some vigilant enemy ready to make the most of our faults, that he might ruin our reputation; what would he single out, were he fully acquainted with our character? Let us examine, amend the past, and be more circumspect for the future.

Further, we infer the delusion of those whose hope and rejoicing are founded on transient impressions, and imaginary private revelations. Leaving the apostolic rule which hath now been considered, and following their own dreams, how can such give a good reason of their hope? What proof that there is not a lie in their right hand? *To the law, and to the testimony: If they speak not according*

to this word, there is no light in them. The testimony of a well-informed conscience to our good conversation in Christ, is the scriptural ground of hope and joy in him.

Again, if Christianity be true, it is rejected at an infinite hazard. It treats of the recovery of a lost world. It promises pardon, grace and glory to them that repent and believe: it denounceth the wrath of God, everlasting destruction, on the impenitent and unbelieving. If this religion be true, there is salvation in no other than Jesus Christ. If it be not true, where shall an apostate world look for salvation from sin and wrath? Wherewith shall they come before the Lord? What shall they offer for the sin of their souls? Suppose the martyrs of Jesus have all been deluded, they might still be far happier men in life, and at the closing scene, than their persecutors. But admitting they have not been deluded, their sufferings were surely unworthy to be compared with their reward in heaven. If Christianity is no fable, the disbelief of it will be irretrievable ruin. Were its evidence, therefore, much less than it is, a wise man would not venture to reject it. There is at least a presumption, a possibility, that it may be true. It can do no man any wrong. The salvation it offers is inconceivably great. It at least claims attention. Were the evidence for it no greater than that against it, the believer embraceth the most safe side. This reason, were there no other, will

determine every wise man. The infidel, consequently, is a fool. If he rejects our religion without examination, he dishonors his own understanding. Doth he dishonor it less, if, having asked and received a reason of our hope, he is not persuaded to be a Christian? What objection can any man of reason have to the Christian character? Now upon this character our text puts the defence of Christianity. Some of the greatest philosophers have professed it, and been its brightest ornaments. The defences of it, in one age and another, shew that it can boast of friends who have been and are the lights of the world. We do not deny but that men of *talents* have embraced the side of infidelity: But we demand whether these have been the friends of virtue and piety? Whether they have been worshippers of God? or have not rather lived without God in the world? We wish that the revelation of Jesus Christ may be fully examined. It requires no other than a reasonable service. It commands us to prove all things. But the infidel, wise in his own conceit, imagines *his* reason can fathom the depths of infinite wisdom. He denies what he cannot search out. He doubts—and doubts—and doubts. At length he calls in question every thing without; and last of all, his own existence. On men of this cast neither arguments nor example can make impression.

Hope maketh not ashamed—the hope of those who are justified by the faith of Christ, and have peace

with God, in whose hearts his love is shed abroad by the Holy Ghost. They glory in tribulation, being sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of their inheritance. Have they any reason to be afraid or ashamed? They have put off the old, and put on the new man. They were children of wrath, but are now heirs of glory. Beholding the glory of the Lord, they have been changed into the same image. They once knew not the way of peace, but they now know it, because they know whom they have believed, and that he will keep what they have committed to him. Angels applaud them. The Father of angels regards them as his jewels. Who are they that deride them? Men lost to truth and virtue, honor and good breeding—men lightly esteemed and abhorred by God—the heirs of shame and everlasting contempt, who at the revelation of Jesus Christ will cry to the rocks and mountains to hide them from his presence : Shall men who deny the Lord that bought them, and say in their heart, there is no God—shall such make the believer ashamed of that Saviour who endured the contradiction of sinners, despising the shame of the cross, for our sakes? Rather rejoice, O believer! and be exceeding glad, though such revile and persecute. *For the Lord knoweth them that are his. If we be dead, we shall also live with him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.*

Finally, Let us examine closely whether our hope is that of the heirs of promise. They all

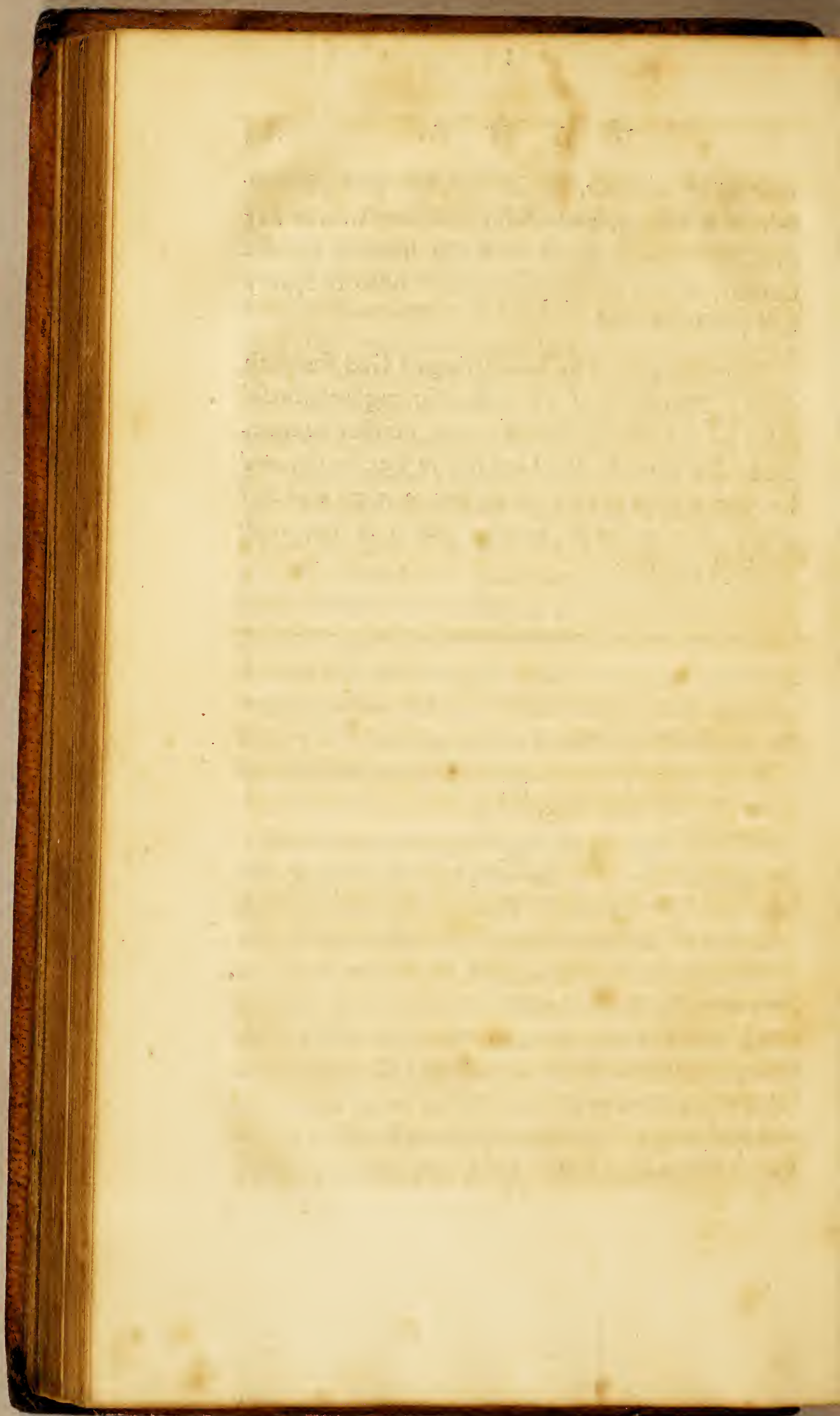
purify themselves as Christ is pure. The mercy of God in him is the only refuge of the guilty. Hereby we are entreated to present our bodies a living sacrifice holy, acceptable to him. If we have presented this sacrifice, we are not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our mind. We call Jesus Christ our hope. Are we sensible of his amazing friendship, and the returns it demands? Are our faith and love such as many waters cannot quench? Are we more than conquerors through him that loved us? Do we strive against the sin that easily besets us, and give all diligence to make our calling and election sure? Is there no occasion of stumbling in us? Are his name, cause and disciples never reproached through our example? Do we shew Christian valor in their defence? Thus may we know the hope of his calling, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.

Do any mourn the removal of friends, who had this hope in life and death? What consolation is this in your grief? Bless God that you do not mourn as others who have no hope. Hear the rod, and who hath appointed it. Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope unto the end. Follow those who inherit the promises. Redeem time. Depend less on earthly comforts. Set your hope more entirely on the promises of God, which in Christ are yea, and amen. Learn a more entire resignation to God. *Look diligently lest any*

man fail of his grace. Make straight paths for your feet. Be sincere, and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.

To conclude: The foundation of God standeth sure. Therefore, if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled: *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.*





S E R M O N XLVI.

ON THE PERSPICUITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

B Y

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2 CORINTHIANS iii. 12, 13.

We use great plainness of speech; and not as Moses, who put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished.

THE apostle speaks not of the writings of Moses in general, much less of all the ancient scriptures; for in many parts of them, as great plainness of speech is used, as in the New-Testament. Moses was an easy familiar author. His history is written with an engaging simplicity; and his moral precepts are expressed with perspicuity and precision. The reference is only to that part of the Mosaic law, which typified the Saviour. Here

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only hung the vail; and here only lies the comparison in the text.

The appearance of the Son of God in human flesh—his sufferings for the sins of men—his resurrection from the dead, and the admission of Gentiles, as well as Jews, to a participation in the benefits of his mediation, were prefigured by various ceremonies, as well as foretold in prophecy. Of these things such a knowledge, as was necessary to faith, hope, and repentance, was attainable under the Mosaic dispensation; but a more distinct knowledge may be acquired under the gospel. An event in existence will be clearer than in prediction. An object in open view will be better understood, than it would be by description.

It is no reproach on the Mosaic writings, that the way of salvation could not be so perfectly learnt from them, as it may from the gospel; for this difference necessarily arises from the different circumstances of the time.

The Jews, indeed, formed very unworthy conceptions of the gospel dispensation. But their misapprehensions were principally owing, not to the obscurity of the Mosaic, or prophetic writings, but to the blindness and prejudice of their own minds. So the apostle observes, in the words following the text. *The children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished; but their minds were blinded: For unto this day remains the same vail untaken away, in the reading of the Old*

Testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless, when it, Israel, shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

The apostle here declares, that the gospel is communicated with great plainness, in distinction from a figurative mystical manner of communication.

My design is to illustrate this point, and then to correct some misapprehensions, which many have entertained concerning it.

The gospel is a revelation from God. The great design of it is to bring salvation to fallen men, by teaching them the attainableness of it—the way in which it was procured, and the terms on which it will be granted. For the same reason, that God would give us a revelation, he most certainly would give us one which may be understood. A greater affront can scarcely be offered to the wisdom and goodness of God, than to suppose the gospel is written with such designed obscurity and mysticism, in the things which immediately concern our duty and salvation, that it needs another revelation to explain it. The apostle, in our text and elsewhere, most expressly declares the contrary.—*We all, says he, with open face, behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord.* Divine things are so plainly laid before us in the gospel-revelation, that we may see them there, as a man sees his own face in a

glafs. *We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty—not walking in craftiness—not handling the word of God deceitfully; but, by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.* It was his earnest desire and prayer, “that God would open to him a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, that he might make it manifest, as he ought to speak.”—And it was his gratitude and joy, that as *the word of God had been made manifest by the preaching committed to him; so the savor of the knowledge of God was manifested in every place, by the preaching of the apostle.* A clear and perspicuous manner of communicating divine truths he esteemed to be of such indispensable necessity, that he made it a distinct subject of discourse in his first epistle to the Corinthians. He there inculcates on the public teachers in the church, that, as they were speaking to men, they were *not in the spirit to speak prophecies; but to utter with the tongue things easy to be understood—to speak in a manner adapted to the understanding of the hearers for their edification and comfort—to manifest the truth so clearly to the conscience, that even the unlearned and unbelievers may be judged and convinced, and so falling down may worship God.*—One, who only speaketh mysteries in the spirit, he compares to a trumpet, which, giving an uncertain sound, warns none to prepare for battle. And he professes, that *he had rather speak five words in the church with his understanding, so as to teach others, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.* As

he did, so ought every preacher to *seek that he may excel to the edifying of the church.*

In opposition to certain mystical teachers, who early crept into the Christian church, the apostle John introduces his first epistle with a declaration, that he and the other apostles had always adapted their instructions to the common sense and understanding of mankind. *That which we have seen and heard, and which our hands have handled of the word of life, we declare unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us: For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and we shew unto you that eternal life, which was manifested to us. And these things we write to you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message, which we have heard, and declare to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness. And if we say, that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. And on account of that clear distinct manner, in which the sacred oracles reveal divine and spiritual things, they are called a light, and compared, not only to a lamp, which guides a traveller's feet by night, but to the sun, which gives day to the hemisphere, and sheds light and heat on those who sit under his friendly beams. The heathens, destitute of revelation, are described as sitting in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death, and as seeking the nearest objects, not by vision, but by feeling after them, if haply they may find them. But God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has*

blest our eyes with *the light of the glorious gospel of Christ*, and has *shined into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.*

It is not denied, that there are some things in the scriptures hard to be understood. Prophecies must, in their nature, be obscure, till they are elucidated by the event. Their general intention may be obvious, but the particular circumstances of the grand event foretold will remain unknown, till the event itself brings them to view.

Some of the doctrines of religion, as the distinction of Father, Son, and Spirit in one deity—the union of the divine and human natures in Jesus Christ—the resurrection of the dead, and the instant change of those who shall be found alive at the coming of Christ, are too deep to be fathomed by the line of human intellect. They are discovered as far as it is necessary for us to know them; and, perhaps, as far as language can discover them to such beings as we are. But still they remain incomprehensible to us, not through unnecessary obscurity in the manner of revelation, but by reason of the sublimity of the subjects, and our own imperfection.

There are many particular passages in revelation difficult to be explained; and after all our enquiries, still doubtful in their meaning; not because they are improperly expressed, but because

certain customs and usages alluded to, are now unknown. It should, however, be always remembered, that no doctrine or duty of religion depends on a *single* passage, much less on a *doubtful* passage of scripture. Be the sense of the uncertain text what it may, still the great articles of Christianity remain clearly stated, and firmly supported elsewhere. Only let us govern ourselves by that which is plain, and a few inexplicable texts will never endanger us.

In all things necessary to eternal salvation, the sacred writings are sufficiently intelligible and clear. What the Psalmist says of the divine law, may with equal truth be applied to the gospel. *The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple: The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.*

The doctrines of the incarnation of the divine Savior, and of his sufferings for the sins of fallen mortals; the doctrines of a universal resurrection—a righteous judgment, and an eternal retribution, are declared as strongly as language can express them, and revealed as clearly as the nature of the subjects will permit. The necessity and the nature of repentance toward God, and faith toward Jesus Christ; the duties and virtues of piety and devotion—of justice, charity, peace, and condescension—of humility, patience, temperance, and self-denial, are stated so plainly, re-

peated so often, inculcated in such a variety of phrases, and illustrated by such pertinent instances and examples, and most of them so familiarly exhibited in the life and character of the divine Redeemer, that no person of common understanding, while he reads with honest attention, can mistake them.

But then we must remember, that in searching the scriptures, we are not to take single detached passages by themselves, and shape them into a conformity to our own pre-concerted scheme. We are to consider the inspired writer's discourse in its natural coherence—observe the dependance of one part on another—compare spiritual things with spiritual, and pursue the enquiry, not with a fixed determination to establish a favorite plan, but with an upright intention to discover the will of God. Thus we shall be led into all truth. If any man desire to do his will, he shall know of every doctrine proposed, whether it be divine, or whether it be the invention of men.

Now this being admitted, which is a certain and undeniable truth, that the sacred writers have used great plainness of speech, we may hence rectify several dangerous errors, which many have entertained concerning the scriptures.

I. Our subject exposes and confutes the very great mistake of those, who suppose that the scriptures in general, even in the historical, doctrinal, and practical parts of them, are not to be under-

stood *literally*, but contain some *secret, mystical* sense, distinct from the literal.

This notion is directly opposite to the express words of the apostle in our text. *We use great plainness of speech; and not as Moses, put a vail on his face. We all with open face behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord.* If the apostles had concealed, under a vail, the sacred doctrines of religion; if they had hidden a spiritual, under a literal meaning; how could it be said, *they used great plainness of speech*, in distinction from the ritual law, which represented, by types and figures, a Saviour to come? The contrast evidently shews, that the obvious, literal sense of the sacred writings is, in general, the true sense, and we are to look for no other. Figures and similitudes are often used by all good writers; not to conceal their meaning, but to exhibit truth in a more clear and striking light. Comparisons and parables frequently occur in the sacred writings; but the design and tendency of them is to illustrate spiritual things, and make them plainer to the apprehension; or to give them an easier entrance into, and deeper impression on the heart. And they are either immediately explained, or else are in themselves so easy and obvious, that common sense cannot fail to understand and apply them.

To suppose that the scriptures are a mere enigma and allegory, not to be understood literally, but according to some curious, far-fetched interpreta-

tion, is to render them nugatory and uselefs. They can, on this fupposition, be no rule of faith or practice; but every man's fancy must be his rule; and the best expofitor of the Bible will not be the man, who has the foundest judgment, the purest heart, and the most improved understanding; but he who has the most teeming invention, and the wildest imagination. At this rate of interpreting it, we shall make it speak any thing and every thing, and consequently we can depend upon nothing.

In the times of the apostles, as we learn from some intimations in their writings, as well as from the writings of the Christian fathers, there were certain heretics who went into the mystical way of treating religion. They denied Christ's real incarnation, death and resurrection, and the literal resurrection of the dead. They taught that Christ came not in the flesh, and that the resurrection was already past. They pretended that these things were only visionary and ideal. The apostle John plainly alludes to these heretics in his first epistle. *Beloved, believe not every spirit, or every man who boasts that he is guided by the spirit; but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets, pretending to be under the direction of the spirit, are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the spirit of God. Every spirit, who confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God; but every spirit, who confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God.* Jude doubtless alludes to the

same persons, when he speaks of certain *dreamers who defile the flesh*. They imagined that all religion consisted in the inward feelings and exercises of the mind, and belonged only to the spirit—that the flesh had no concern in the religion of man here, and would take no share in the happiness of man hereafter. Hence *they defiled the flesh*; took an unbounded licence to indulge the motions, and gratify the inclinations of the flesh. Read, with attention, those two epistles, and you will find persons of this description opposed and condemned.

But you will tell me, Paul himself often calls religion a mystery, and says, *Great is the mystery of godliness—we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery: the bidden wisdom*.

But will you hence conclude, that the gospel is a hidden mysterious scheme of religion? Only read, in connexion, the passages alledged, and you will see that nothing could be farther from his intention.

There are, as we have observed, certain grand and astonishing doctrines in the gospel; incomprehensible indeed, but not unintelligible. You cannot, by searching, find out God; you cannot fathom the depth of his counsels; yet there is such a thing as the knowledge of God's character and will. We may know what is necessary to be known; but we cannot stretch our minds to grasp that which is, in its nature, incomprehensible.

It is however, in a sense still different from this, that the gospel scheme is called a mystery; as you will easily see, if you attend to the several places where this word is used.

The apostle says to the Ephesians, *To me is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, that now might be known the manifold wisdom of God.* This mystery, this manifold wisdom, these unsearchable riches, are things, which, from the beginning of the world, had been hidden in the purpose of God; but were, by the preaching of the apostles, so clearly made known, that all men could see them. The dispensation of providence in the salvation of mankind by Jesus Christ, is called a mystery, with respect to that time when it was hidden in God's secret purpose; but not with respect to the time when it was declared and revealed, so that all men might see and know it.

In his epistle to the Romans, the apostle calls his preaching *a revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest; and by the scriptures of the prophets is made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.* The great work of redemption by Christ, and the calling of all nations to share in this redemption, was a mystery in former ages, being hidden in God's counsel, and not fully discovered even to Jews, much

less to Gentiles. But since the coming of Christ, it is no longer a mystery. It is now manifested and revealed by the preaching of the apostles, as well as by the scriptures of the prophets, to all nations, as well as to the Jews.

What the principal doctrines are, which this glorious mystery comprises, and which are now made known for our faith and obedience, the apostle has shewn in his first epistle to Timothy. *Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.*

Again the apostle says, *I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.* Can we suppose that the apostle shewed them something, which still remained a mystery after he had shewed it. No, that would be a contradiction: But he shewed them that which had been a mystery before; how those would be disposed of who were found alive at Christ's coming.

In his first epistle to the Corinthians, he tells them in what light they were to view the preachers of the gospel. *Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.* His meaning surely is not that they were to preach mystically; preach things which would remain mysteries after they had been preached them: but that God had committed to them the dispensation of the doctrines of the gospel, which, as

faithful stewards, they were to distribute by manifesting them to all men.

Further he says, *We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory.* But then he adds, *God hath revealed it to us by his spirit, that we might know the things that are freely given us of God, which things we speak.* This mystery was that which had been hidden, but was now revealed and known to the apostles; and this they spake, that others also might know it as well as they.

I need not refer to other passages. It is sufficient to observe in general, that the word *mystery*, is commonly used in the same sense, throughout the New Testament, and especially in St. Paul's writings; not to signify something which is still unknown, but something which had been unknown, and was now made manifest. To *know* the *mystery* of the kingdom of God—not to be ignorant of the *mystery*—to *understand* all *mysteries*—to *see* what is the fellowship of the *mystery*—to *hold* the *mystery* of faith—to *acknowledge* and *make known* the *mystery* of the gospel, are phrases which so frequently occur, that no doubt can remain concerning the sense in which the word is used.

Our business then is to read and search the scriptures, and to attend on the dispensation of the gospel, in the way of God's appointment, that we may understand that great mystery of godliness, which was unknown to the early ages of the world, and

is still unknown to many nations of the earth; but is revealed and manifested to us by the scriptures of the prophets, and more fully by the scriptures of the apostles, who used great plainness of speech. Let us contemplate with gratitude, and receive with joy the riches of divine grace. Let us give all diligence to secure a share in that great salvation, which was purchased by the Redeemer's blood, and is now in the distinguishing mercy of our God, clearly revealed, and freely offered to us.

II. Our text shews the great mistake of those who imagine, that the scriptures cannot be understood without some *special, immediate* discovery from the spirit of God.

To prevent misapprehensions, I would observe, we are no less dependent on the grace of God in the concerns of religion, than on his providence in the business of common life; and we need the kind direction and assistance of his spirit in searching the scriptures, as well as in the other ordinary duties of religion. But then the guidance of the spirit, in this matter, is in a way of aid to our natural faculties, not in a way of revelation. It is by *opening the understanding, fixing the attention, bringing to remembrance*—and removing prejudices against the truth; not by immediate discovery and communication. We are, therefore, to *lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, to put on meekness and humbleness of mind*, and to search the scriptures with careful attention, and not to ex-

pect that, without our enquiry, the truth contained in them will be immediately revealed.

If the scriptures are written plainly, why may we not, by the proper use of our faculties, understand these, as well as other plain writings? The only difference is in the aversion of a corrupt heart to divine and spiritual truths, and in the consequent inattention, forgetfulness, prejudice, and neglect of enquiry. Let this aversion be removed or suspended, and attentive enquiry take place, and there will be no more difficulty in understanding the holy writings, than common writings. All then that we can suppose the spirit of God to do in this case, is to awaken a sense of the importance of divine things, and open the heart to attend to them. When this is done, there will be such a proper use of our faculties, as will lead us to a competent knowledge of revealed truths, without an additional revelation.

The apostle, speaking of the great doctrines of the gospel, says, *God hath revealed them to us, the apostles, by his spirit; for the spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God—which things we also speak; and we use great plainness of speech.* But to what purpose have they so plainly spoken the things which were revealed to them by the spirit, if still we need to have them revealed to us by the spirit, as much as if they had never been spoken? If we cannot understand this written revelation, without another to explain it, how shall we under-

stand the explanatory revelation without a third? We may as well be in doubt concerning the second, as the first; and, at this rate, there will be no end of revelation; and after all, we may not know, whether we understand any of them.

The apostle John says, *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God. But how shall we try them? He adds, Hereby know we the spirit of God: Every spirit, who confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God. Every spirit, whose dictates correspond with the plain doctrines of the gospel, is divine. But every spirit, who confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God.* Every suggestion which contradicts the divine oracles, is from a false spirit. The apostle, you see, makes the word of revelation the standard, by which you are to try and prove every spirit. But tell me how you will use this as a test and rule of trial, if you cannot understand it without an immediate discovery from the spirit? Are you to learn the meaning of the word from the spirit, and, at the same time, prove the truth of the spirit by the word? Must you not know your rule, before you can apply it to measure things unknown? Are you not to act as rationally in religion, as in the ordinary affairs of life? Whatever suggestion of your own minds; whatever doctrine of your most admired teachers, contradicts the revelation, which God has already given, conclude

it to be false. Never suspect that the spirit of God contradicts itself.

The opinion in question, you see, must be false; and a little attention will convince you, that it is as fatal as it is false. It at once sets aside the use of the divine oracles, and leaves you without a guide. It lays you open and defenceless to every dangerous delusion. If once you conclude that the word of God can be understood only by immediate discovery, you will naturally take every impulse and suggestion, whether from Satan or your own fancy, to be a heavenly dictate; and no rule will you have by which to examine it. You will drop all religious enquiry, and give yourself up to the fatal guidance of internal impressions, or of the instructions of those, whose daring pretensions lead you to imagine, that they are taught by the spirit of God. Thus you will become an easy prey to every wicked and subtle deceiver, and will soon fall into strong delusions to believe a lie. When you render your bible useless by substituting something else in its place, you have lost all your security. You are liable to be driven about with every wind of doctrine—by the flight of men—by the impulse of imagination, and by the artifice of seducing spirits. In case of doubt, you will have nothing to which you can recur but your own feelings; and these will only strengthen the deception, and you will wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

Fix then on this as a grand and leading principle, that the word of God is a sufficient rule of faith and practice, and that this is so plain, that, with God's ordinary assistance, it may be understood by proper attention and examination. Adhere invariably to this rule, and immediately reject whatever you find inconsistent with it, or not capable of being supported by it.

3. Another error, similar to, and growing out of the former, which our text plainly confutes, is, that natural or unregenerate men are incapable of understanding the scriptures.

It will be necessary distinctly to state this point, that my meaning may not be misapprehended.

It is granted, in the first place, that men of corrupt and vicious hearts understand not divine truths in their excellence and importance; or, to speak more properly, they have not that sensible, realizing view of the certainty of them, and their own vast and immediate concern in them, which is necessary to give them a practical influence.—To use the apostle's expression, *They receive not the love of the truth*. They receive it not as the word of God, and therefore it worketh not in them effectually, as it does in them who believe. But they may have a *rational, doctrinal* knowledge of the religion taught in the gospel. Their speculative opinions may be just and scriptural. They may have as good a stock of Christian knowledge

in their heads, as many of the regenerate, though it does not in the same manner influence the heart.

It is farther granted, that a holy and upright heart is a great help in gaining a doctrinal knowledge of the scriptures. A carnal and vicious man is apt to neglect the means of knowledge, or to attend upon them in a negligent manner. His vices naturally prejudice him against the truth, and dispose him to overlook or pervert it. While the gospel condemns and urges him to renounce his favorite sins, he is under a powerful temptation to relax its doctrine and precepts, that he may indulge his iniquities with less apprehension of danger.— But the honest and pure heart loves the truth, and readily embraces it, when it is fairly proposed with its evidence. So that, I say, the good man stands fairer to gain a right doctrinal knowledge of the scriptures, than any of a vicious heart.

There is, however such a thing as a natural man's having just sentiments of religion, and a good understanding of the great doctrines of the gospel. As in the renewed there are remaining corruptions, which may expose them to speculative errors in the less important things of religion; so some un-sanctified men, by a certain natural openness of mind, accompanied with a good education, may be secured from gross and capital mistakes. And those corruptions and prejudices, which naturally oppose the truth, may, by the awakening influence of the divine spirit, be so far restrained and suf-

pended, that conviction will enter, and truth gain their assent. If the scriptures are written with plainness, the same natural powers, which understand other things, may, with due application, understand these.

Saint Paul supposes, that a man, who has no charity, and who, in religion, is no more than a mere tinkling cymbal, may yet understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and speak on divine subjects with the tongue of an angel. Speaking of himself and other apostles, he says, *By manifestation of the truth, we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.* But how could they, in their preaching, manifest the truth and commend it to every man's conscience, if sinners understood not their meaning? He enjoins Timothy, *to instruct with meekness them who oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgement of the truth.* But would Timothy's meek instructions convince of the truth those who could not understand him?

The apostle to the Hebrews speaks of some, *who, after they have been enlightened, and have tasted the good word of God, fall away, and are never renewed again to repentance.* These doubtless are unregenerate men, for they fall away to destruction; but they were enlightened, and had tasted the good word of God. Certainly they had a doctrinal knowledge of it; yea, they felt some influence from it also.

The apostle Peter tells us of some, *who had escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and yet are again entangled therein and overcome.* They had such a knowledge of the gospel as to be very observably influenced and reformed by it. They escaped the pollutions of the world. But they were still unrenewed. They are again, not only entangled, but overcome. *And their last state is worse than the first.* It is added, *It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they had known it, to turn from the holy commandment.*—They knew the way of righteousness, and yet turned from it. There are those, who know their Lord's will, and do it not, and who will, therefore, be beaten with many stripes.

Saint Paul, in his instructions to the prophets in Corinth, says, *If all prophecy, i. e. speak with perspicuity; and there come in, into the assembly, one who believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all—he is judged of all—and so falling down he will worship God, and report, that God is in you of a truth.* The unlearned and the unbeliever may understand, and be convinced by the doctrines of the gospel, when they are plainly proposed.

Farther, The apostles James and Peter expressly teach us, that *Christians have been begotten by the word of truth, and born of this incorruptible seed.* But how can the word be a means of effecting this change, if it cannot be understood before the change

is effected? *By the law is the knowledge of sin.* But in order to its producing this knowledge, it must itself first be known. *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* There may then, before faith, be a knowledge of the word of God.

When Felix heard Paul reason of righteousness, and temperance, and a future judgment, he trembled. Did not he understand the preacher?—How came he else to tremble?

When Peter, on the day of Pentecost, proved by plain arguments taken from the ancient scriptures, and by recent acts known to all, that Jesus, who had been crucified, was both Lord and Christ, his hearers felt the conviction: They were pricked in their heart.

But enough, and more than enough has been said, to shew, that the notion, which we are opposing, is directly contrary to the tenor of the gospel. A little attention will convince you, that it is also pregnant with most dangerous consequences.

Admitting it to be true, the conclusion is, there is nothing incumbent on sinners in order to their conversion—it is vain for them to read the gospel, or hear it preached—there is no possibility of their gaining any religious knowledge before their conversion, and it is preposterous to seek any. Reason has nothing to do in matters of religion, and revelation, indeed, but very little: But men must wait for immediate dictates from on high.

Farther, if none but gracious persons understand the scriptures, then a right understanding of them is an evidence of grace. Well—every man who has formed any opinion at all, naturally concludes, that his own opinion is right; consequently he will conclude himself in a state of grace, because he knows the truth. And if we make this a test of grace in the heart, we shall condemn every man as a sinner, who thinks not precisely as we do. Our minds will be fast closed against farther light. We shall be obstinately tenacious of our own sentiments, right or wrong. If we fall into an error, we shall never part with it. Arguments from scripture will avail nothing to our conviction; for we are spiritual—we judge all things, and will be judged of no man.

But here it will probably be alledged, the apostle Paul himself, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, ii chap. 14 verse, says, *The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned; but he that is spiritual judgeth all things.*—From this passage some have inferred, that no unregenerate man can have a right understanding of the doctrines of the gospel. But this inference so palpably contradicts the plain texts already adduced, that it can by no means be admitted. Only attend to the scope and connexion of the apostle's discourse in this chapter, and his meaning will no longer be doubtful. He is

speaking of the necessity of revelation, in order to our understanding the nature of the gospel-dispensation, which was a mystery hidden from former ages, but was now made known to the apostles by the Spirit, and by them was plainly preached to mankind. In confirmation of the necessity of revelation, he says, *The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God.*—The man, in a state of nature, he who has nothing to guide him but natural reason and human wisdom, *He receiveth not the things of the spirit*; the things revealed in the gospel by that spirit, which was communicated to the apostles; *For they are foolishness to him*; being destitute of that pomp and parade of human wisdom, by which the wise men of the world captivated their hearers; *neither can he know them*, by any sagacity or study of his own, *because they are spiritually discerned*; they are above the discovery of human reason, and discovered only by revelation. He does not say a natural man cannot know them when they are discovered; but he cannot know them before they are discovered by that revelation, which the spirit communicated to the apostles, and which they preached to others.

Yea, further, the doctrines of Jesus Christ seemed foolishness to many, because they were not taught according to the wisdom of the world, by deductions of human reason. The apostle says, *The Greeks seek after wisdom—we preach Christ crucified.*

cified—to the Greeks foolishness, but to them who are saved—the wisdom of God. A man under the power of a carnal mind, and filled with a vain conceit of his own superior knowledge and goodness, discerns not in the gospel-scheme of salvation, that heavenly wisdom and excellence, which a humble, penitent soul perceives and admires. His speculative opinions of the gospel may be right; but the pride and corruption of his heart prevent him from receiving it with approbation and love. The unregenerate and the regenerate may both understand the doctrines of the gospel alike—may quite agree in their speculative sentiments about them—may be equally sound and orthodox in their opinions; and yet they have a different relish and affection for these doctrines. The former, opposed to them in the temper of his heart, discerns no such excellence in them, as to yield to their power and influence. The latter loves, embraces and obeys them. The essential discriminating difference between them lies not in their knowledge of, and opinions about religion; but in their practical regard and affection to it.

4. Our subject teaches us the true method of preaching the gospel.

The preacher, after the example of the apostles, must use great plainness of speech, and by manifestation of the truth, commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God; lay before

his hearers divine truths, with convincing perspicuity; reason with them out of the scriptures, and from the principles of natural religion; open to them the doctrines and precepts of revelation, by a judicious collection, and fair illustration of pertinent passages; and urge them home on the conscience by well-chosen arguments.

The method of some declaimers, to allegorize the plainest passages, and turn every literal text to a mystical sense, however it may amuse the ignorant and injudicious, and raise in their minds an admiration of the speaker's knowledge and grace, contributes nothing to improve the understanding, or to mend the heart. It is a criminal abuse and perversion of the divine word, adapted only to mislead the blind, and beguile unstable souls. Such preachers *turn away from the truth, and are turned unto fables.*

5. You learn from the preceding observations, in what manner you ought to hear the word.

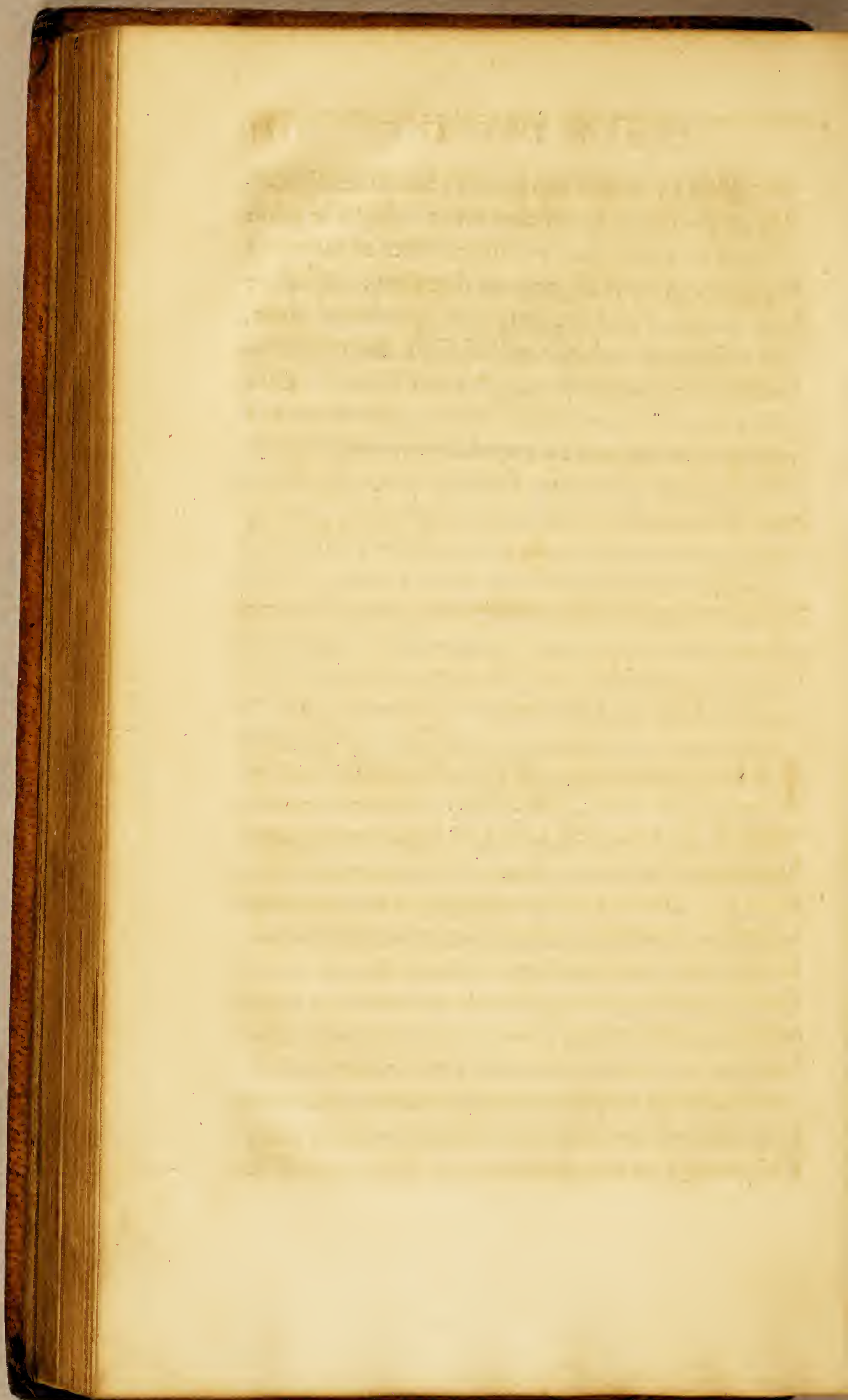
The gospel is written with a plainness suited to common understandings. Hear the preaching of it, not with implicit credulity, but with honest attention, judging for yourselves what is truth. What is agreeable to the sacred oracles, receive with readiness, and obey with cheerfulness. What appears doubtful bring to the testimony. What this condemns you must reject. Examine obscure

texts by those which are plain; prove speculative opinions by practical precepts.

To conclude: It concerns you to be well settled in your religious principles, that you may not be carried about with every wind of doctrine. To this end search the scriptures diligently and humbly, applying, in your enquiries, all proper assistances. Revere the scriptures as a revelation from heaven, given to instruct you, what you ought to believe, to be, and to practise. Make these the standard by which to try every doctrine and every spirit. Bear in mind this thought, that religion is a rational thing, designed to make men wise, good and happy. Remember that it consists not in wild fallies of imagination, or vehement transports of passion; but in a calm, steady view of divine truths, influencing the temper and life; and whenever it takes possession of men's hearts, renders them like to God in holiness; gives them approving apprehensions of his character; directs them to a uniform love of him, hope in him and obedience to him; disposes them to justice, peace, candor and beneficence toward mankind; subdues their lusts and worldly affections; forms them to sobriety, meekness and purity; and makes them better men in all changes of condition, and in all relations of life. In short, consider, that religion is a solid, and an amiable thing; and they who possess it, are really excellent and substantially good.

Guided by these sentiments, you will easily distinguish between truth and error. Let the plain sense of scripture, not the suggestions of fancy, or the opinions of men, be your directory. Enquire with humility and integrity, with a desire to know, and resolution to do the will of God, fervently imploring the guidance of his good spirit. Thus will your enquiries be successful; for *the meek he will guide in judgment; the meek he will teach his way.*





S E R M O N XLVII.

THE PROFITABLE HEARER OF THE
WORD OF GOD.

B Y

A B R A H A M B E A C H, D. D.

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LUKE viii. 18.

Take heed, therefore, how you hear.

IT is our happiness to live in a Christian land, to be blessed with sabbaths and sanctuary opportunities, to have the word of God continually sounding in our ears, saying, this is the way, walk ye in it. Under such advantages, it is natural to expect we should be holy in all manner of conversation; that intemperance, profaneness, and every species of iniquity would be forever banished from among us, and crying and complaining no more heard in our streets; for these are the fruits which our most holy religion always produces, wherever it is received in truth and sincerity. Why then it is natural to ask, does not the Christian world

more resemble that holy mountain of the Lord, foretold by the prophet, where nothing shall hurt or destroy? Why are many professing Christians as much devoted to vicious indulgences as if they never heard of the gospel? No other answer can be given to these questions than this, because they either spurn from them the invaluable blessing, or receive it with a careless indifference.

To those who are elsewhere employed in trifling amusements, or in scenes of riot and dissipation, of what consequence is it that the glad tidings of salvation are published every Lord's-day in our churches? Nor is it of much more advantage to those who hear without a desire of being benefited. There is, indeed, this difference between them, one, deliberately, throws himself out of the way of instruction, while the other, by attending the public institutions of religion, may receive serious impressions when he least expects it.

A great multitude, induced many of them by no other motive than curiosity, being collected to hear him; our Saviour wished to turn their curiosity to some account, and to lead them from being barely hearers, to become doers of the word. With this benevolent intention he introduced the parable of sower, of which, the words of the text are the application.

It was natural for him to take his allusions principally from rural scenes and avocations, because Judea, the scene of his ministry, was inhabited by

the descendants of the Patriarchs, a people wholly occupied in the business of agriculture. They continually saw the success of their labors, they saw the seed which they sowed in their fields, some fall by the way-side, some on a rock, and some among thorns; they naturally expected the first would be trodden down, the second, wither away, and the other be choaked; and that none but what fell on good ground, and was carefully attended to, would yield any increase. To those people, therefore, nothing was more easy than the application of the parable.

That no more fruit is produced among professing Christians, where the seed of God's word is continually scattered abroad, must be owing to their not preparing their hearts to receive it, to their not attending to it with proper affections and dispositions, and to their neglecting to cherish it afterwards. All this is naturally inferred from the parable; for no fault is found with the seed that came down from heaven, nor with the sower of it, for he was the son of man; nor is there a word mentioned of inclemency of weather, blast, mildew or drought, or any other impediment to retard the seed in its growth.

That there is sufficient efficacy in the word of God to answer all the ends of our salvation, is evident from the prophet's beautiful description of it. *As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth and*

maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth, it shall accomplish that which I please, it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

But however plenteously showers may fall from heaven, or how efficacious soever they may be in causing the earth to yield its increase, when they descend on a cultivated field, they can produce no such salutary effects, when they fall on a rock, or on a hard and obdurate soil.

In the same manner, though the word of God should drop on us as the rain, *and distil as the dew, as the small rain on the tender plant, and as the showers on the grass*; if our hearts are not prepared to receive it, if we hear it with a cold indifference, or suffer it to be dissipated by the cares and vanities of the world, we cannot expect any beneficial effects from it.

We all know it to be the duty of a Christian, regularly to attend the public ordinances of religion, not only to offer our supplications to the throne of grace, but to hear the great truths of the gospel explained and inculcated; but we do not consider how much is implied in this duty. I am persuaded that the want of attention to this circumstance, more than all other obstacles put together, impedes the progress of the gospel.

When we are about to execute a particular business relating to our temporal concerns, a little

meat that perisheth, or glittering dust perhaps, that every puff of air may dissipate, we think it a matter of importance, we enter on it with all the vigor of our minds, and pursue it with steadiness, with pleasure and delight. But with what languor do we sometimes enter on a business which concerns every thing dear to us in life, and what is infinitely more, our happiness throughout the ages of eternity? I wish, therefore, to call your attention to a subject which appears an important one, the necessary requisites in a profitable hearer of the word of God.

In the first place then, before we enter the sanctuary, we should compose our minds to seriousness and meditation, we should discard every worldly thought, and confine our attention solely to ourselves, and to that great and incomprehensible Being, whose immediate presence we are approaching; we should call to mind that we are poor worms of the dust, created by his power, preserved by his goodness, and redeemed by his love; that all we have, all we are, and all we hope for is from him; that we are dependant upon him for every breath we draw, and accountable to him for every thing we do.

If, with such sentiments of God, and of our dependance on him, we enter his house, we shall feel no disposition to offer the sacrifice of fools, or to indulge a levity of thought or behavior, which is always offensive to heaven, destructive of all the

ends of religion, and abhorrent to every idea of common decency.—They are sentiments too that cannot fail of commanding our serious attention to the duties before us, which is another requisite in the profitable hearer.

When our attention is called to subjects the most solemn and important, and which concern our dearest interests, such as the infinite mercy of God, the graces and virtues of Christianity, the divine promises; when we are affectionately warned to flee from the wrath to come, to prepare for death, judgment and eternity; instead of listening to them with reverence, should our thoughts wander to the ends of the world, should we return to our secular employments, and go one to his farm, and another to his merchandize; though an angel from heaven were to preach to us, it would answer no other purpose than to increase our condemnation at the bar of God, where we must all appear sooner perhaps than we imagine, to render an account of the talents committed to our trust.

In order to receive any benefit from hearing the word of God, besides a due preparation of mind before we enter his house, and serious attention in it, we must be possessed of a docile disposition, free from every kind of prejudice.

We never object to any thing we hear from the pulpit, if it corresponds with our favorite opinions, or is indulgent to our wishes and desires; but the moment we hear any thing which interferes with

them, or excites apprehensions with respect to our temporal interest, how natural is it to go out in search of objections, to put those objections in the most favorable point of light, and to stop our ears against the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely?

When our blessed Saviour was upon earth, multitudes pressed round him from every quarter, listened with raptures to his eloquence, and looked up to him with reverence; but the instant he preached to them the disagreeable doctrine of laboring not for *the meat that perisheth*—of *taking up the cross*, and following him through afflictions—through scoffs and insults, and all the horrors of an ignominious death; they turned their backs upon him, and *walked no more with him*. And is there nothing of this temper remaining in the world? When honor, glory and immortality—when pleasures infinitely greater than eye hath seen, ear heard, or hath entered into the heart of man to conceive, happen to be the subject of the preacher, we listen to him with pleasure; but when he tell us of that *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish which await every soul of man that doeth evil*; if we do not feel inclined to turn our backs upon him, we, at least, wish to put off to a more convenient season such gloomy reflections.

That the impenitent transgressor shall be banished from the presence of the Lord, and dwell forever where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not

quenched, is attested by the same authority—the same infallible spirit of God, that promises endless and unspeakable happiness to the true followers of Jesus; and yet we frequently see one of these doctrines taken and the other left—one believed and the other not. Unless such prejudices are weeded out, they will insensibly grow up, and choke every good seed that is sown.

The profitable hearer endeavors, by the grace of God, not only to free himself from any partialities respecting the doctrines of the gospel, but the preachers of it likewise. He will receive the word with meekness, and a sincere desire of improvement, whoever delivers it, or however plain it may be, and unadorned; knowing that when unadorned, it is frequently adorned the most.

It is not an idle curiosity—an itching ear—the hope of an hour's amusement, or a criticising disposition that brings him to the house of God, but a sincere desire of growing in grace—of hearing his duty, in order to practice it. With such a disposition, he will receive some benefit from even the meanest of our discourses, but without it the best seed will be sowed in vain.

Whatever be the subject of the preacher, the profitable hearer considers whether he cannot, some way or other, apply it to himself. If any particular vice is reprehended, instead of looking round for an object on whom he may fix it, his attention is confined altogether to himself, and he seriously

asks his heart, whether he is not himself guilty of it.

Should any Christian duty be explained and inculcated, he sends forth to heaven a silent ejaculation for grace, and fervently prays that God would incline his heart to perform it; or, should the wonders of redeeming love be the theme, his heart expands with gratitude to the Saviour of the world, and he earnestly inquires how he may become a partaker of his great salvation.

Should the glories of heaven be displayed, he sends forth ardent aspirations after them—should the road to it be pointed out, he carefully imprints it on his mind, and determines steadily to pursue it—to guard against the least deviation from it, or loitering on the way.

When the seed of God's word falls on ground thus prepared to receive it, it will spring up, spread abroad its branches, and produce the fruits of righteousness in a well-ordered life and conversation. But, how discouraging must it be to preach to the unprepared, the inattentive, or the prejudiced? To sow the seeds of virtue by the way-side, on a rock, or among thorns?

To preach the doctrine of mortification and self-denial to the thoughtless, gay voluptuary—to recommend it to a mere man of the world, to take off his affections from it—to love his enemies—to do good to those who hate him—to be meek and

lowly—in honor preferring others to himself, is only plowing the sand, and sowing seed on the water.

To be profitable hearers of the word, it is necessary, not only to prepare our minds, by suitable reflections, to give our serious attention, and to divest ourselves of every kind of prejudice; but that we come with an honest intention of being doers, as well as hearers, of the word. Without such an intention, we may sit with pleasure to hear the gospel, and yet suffer every good impression, like the seed which fell on stony ground, to wither away.

When wrapped into future times, the prophet foretold the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom, and the rapid increase of it in the world, he represents the Gentiles calling on each other in such language as this; *Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths.* It is not sufficient that we go up to the mountain of the house of the Lord, or that he teach us of his ways, we must walk in his paths. Let no one, then, judge of his proficiency in religion by the number of sermons he has heard, but by the graces and virtues of Christianity, which are implanted and growing up within him; for he may be assured, that, unless his attendance on a preached gospel incline him to be more honest and upright in his dealings—more sober and temperate

more peaceable, friendly and benevolent—more disengaged from this world, and more intent on his preparation for another, he has heard to no manner of purpose.

Much is required of a minister of the gospel; he must be faithful in his master's service—must endeavor to awaken careless sinners by the terrors of the Lord—persuade them, by the mercies of heaven, to return and live—and to recommend to all men the religion of a crucified Saviour by every mean in his power. But, after all his persuasions—after all his entreaties—after all his warnings, it will remain with themselves to determine whether they will profit by them or not.

If, then, so much is required in order to become profitable hearers of the word, we see the necessity of looking up to God to help our infirmities, and to renew us in the inward frame and temper of our minds. Without his grace, all our endeavors will be fruitless; but we have the satisfaction of knowing, that if we ask in sincerity, we shall never be denied; the author of our religion having assured us, that God will not fail to give his holy spirit to those who ask him.

Finally, My beloved brethren, if ye wish to be profitable hearers of the word of God, let no unworthy designs accompany you to his house.—Come to it as Christians, with charity, with humility, with an honest heart; and, above all, with a

determined resolution to practise what you hear. Then you will always hear as you ought to do; and the seed sown in your hearts being watered by the dews of heavenly grace, will bring forth an abundant increase of piety and virtue, of comfort and satisfaction to yourselves in this life, and of unfading glory in that which is to come.



S E R M O N XLVIII.

THE BARREN FIG-TREE.

B Y

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MARK xi. 12, 13, 14.

And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry, and seeing a fig-tree afar off, having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon, and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet: And Jesus answered and said unto it, no man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

FRUITFULNESS in religion, love, faith, humility and devotion towards God; purity, temperance and chastity towards ourselves; and righteousness, truth, mercy and charity towards our neighbors, are of infinite importance. Not bringing forth fruits meet for repentance, barrenness, or unprofitableness, are heinous evils indeed. They dishonor God, frustrate the design of the

bleſſed goſpel, injure ſociety, and entail certain ruin upon the immortal ſoul. This we have finely illuſtrated, and ſtrongly enforced in this hiſtory before us, of our Lord's deſtruction of the barren fig-tree.

Before we proceed to the intention of Chriſt Jeſus in this tranſaction, and the uſe which we ought to make of it, ſome obſervations may be made upon the objections which have been offered to this relation. As St. Matthew relates this ſtory, there is no difficulty attending it whatſoever. He informs us what our Lord did with reſpect to the fig-tree, without adding any circumſtances of the action. But St. Mark has occaſioned ſome perplexity, and many evil remarks from prejudiced readers, by his more particular and circumſtantial account. He has added two expreſſions, from which the enemies of Chriſtianity have endeavored to give a diſadvantageous idea of its author. To what St. Matthew ſays of this fact, St. Mark ſubjoins theſe two circumſtances; the one, *If hap-ly he might find any thing thereon*; and this other, *for the time of figs was not yet*.

By the *fiſt* of theſe expreſſions, it appears that the expectations of our Lord were raiſed by ſeeing a fig-tree aſar off, he hoped to relieve his hunger, ſuppoſing there might be fruit on a tree, which promiſed ſo well at a diſtance. But, *when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves*.—Here this queſtion has been reproachfully aſked, to the ſtumbling of the weak, and the diſtreſs of the ſincere, “How can

“ this consist with the divinity and perfection of
 “ Jesus Christ, that he should be deceived or mis-
 “ taken?” But this may be easily solved. Outward
 objects made the same impression upon our Saviour
 which they did upon other men. In common life
 he acted as men ordinarily do in similar circumstan-
 ces. Therefore, the fig-tree presented to his sight
 when he was hungry, raised in him the desires and
 sensations it would have done in another. Hunger
 was a sensation our Lord felt in common with other
 men. It was a natural appetite, and to be satisfi-
 ed in the usual way. He never wrought miracles
 when there was no need of them, or no important
 end to be answered by them. Hence, we find him
 sending his disciples to buy provisions; he asks
 water to drink of a Samaritan woman, &c. Our
 Lord, notwithstanding he thought it no robbery
 to be equal with the Father, and did claim equal
 homage and worship, and was a divine person, yet
 was truly and really man; subject to all the appe-
 tites, infirmities, and imperfections proper to hu-
 man nature, sin only excepted.

In this view, we can easily explain that observa-
 tion of St. Luke, relating to our Saviour, *That he*
increased in wisdom and stature; that is, he improv-
 ed in body and mind; he grew wise—he advanced
 in knowledge and understanding, as he advanced
 in years. He acquired human knowledge as o-
 thers do in a way of observation, experience, rea-
 soning and reflection. Jesus Christ, as man, was

not born with a fund of knowledge, or with all that stock of ideas which he was ever to have.

These remarks plainly obviate the difficulty.—No imperfection can be imputed to our Lord from what is here said in this passage, only such as is the necessary consequence of human nature. Though his knowledge, as man, was not absolutely perfect, it can no more be a diminution of his character, than it can to any other person, that his science is not infinite.

I have not gone into these observations on the imperfections of the human nature in Christ, merely to solve the difficulty in this text, but to place this subject in a just and true light. A proper idea of this matter will render many apparent difficulties in scripture easy and plain. The want of attention here often leads to confusion in the minds, and discourses of some, while they seem to talk and think as if the human was swallowed up in the divine nature.

The knowledge of Christ may be considered in a threefold view; as divine, human and inspired. His divine knowledge, as God, is infinite and infallible—his human, as man, was limited, uncertain, and acquired by degrees—his inspired knowledge was also partial, and communicated to him at seasons.

In relation to the first sort Simon Peter must be understood to speak, when he ascribes all know-

ledge to Jesus, even of the secrets of the heart.—
Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.—Of his human knowledge St. Mark here speaks in our text. His prophetic knowledge, mentioned in many places, is plainly confirmed in the beginning of the revelation. *The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him.*

Further, It is proper to be remarked, with regard to the actions of our Saviour, they were often done upon very different motives from what appeared at first to the spectators. His actions, as well as his discourses, were designed for instruction. There was often a moral in his behavior, as well as in his parables. When he girded himself with a towel and washed his disciples feet, he had more in view than merely to cleanse them. His intention was to teach them humility, condescension, kindness, love, and a train of virtues, in the most moving and sensible manner. Yet they did not take his design, till it was expressly explained to them. Thus is the case before us; he went to the fig-tree not merely to satisfy his hunger, but to instruct his disciples throughout all ages; to teach them, who were present with him, the future destiny of Jerusalem for their misimprovement of the most distinguished advantages; and all others, the danger of barrenness, and the absolute necessity of fruitfulness in the ways of God. This was not adverted to by the disciples, till our Lord explained his conduct. From hence, in this transaction, at-

tending to all the characters our Lord sustained, it is evident, he was neither deceived nor mistaken. He might have known it was barren, and have gone to it for this reason, to illustrate his purpose, and exhibit the great evil of barrenness in religion to all mankind.

The *second* difficulty imagined in the text is derived from these words, *The time of figs was not yet.* Therefore, some prejudiced readers of the New Testament, have triumphed in an objection found here to Christianity, as though it absolutely demolished the whole system. As if the total sum of evidence, in favor of the Christian religion, was really confronted and set aside by the ignorant and superficial force of a single remark. Our English translation of these words is, perhaps, not so happily expressed, but the original is plain, obvious, and easy to every candid and fair mind. *The time of gathering in the figs was not yet.* That is, they were now ripe on the trees, fit for use or to eat, but not yet carried in, or laid up in their stores. Now could there possibly be either folly or weakness in expecting to find fruit proper upon this tree, which had leaves as other fruit-bearing trees, and looked green and flourishing at a distance. We have another precisely similar phrase used by St. Matthew, which has never been objected to by any, because plainly translated. *The time of the fruit.* The fruit was ripe, the season of harvest come, therefore, the husbandman sent his servants

to receive the fruits of his vineyard; but he also was mistaken or disappointed.*

I should not have made these remarks for the removal of seeming difficulties in our text, only for the sake of some, who are extremely fond of objections against the scriptures, and desirous of improving every little thing in criticism, or in their chronology, to weaken, if not to destroy their pretensions to a divine original.

We shall now attend to the moral sense and design of our Saviour, in this action of destroying the barren fig-tree, and the improvement which we ought to make of it.

To illustrate the intention of our Lord in this action, it may be observed, that the prophets in the Old Testament, to express their prophecies and the comminations of heaven against the Jews, employed not only words, but such symbolical actions, as did in the most lively manner, paint their

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* *Kairos buchoon*, and *Kairos toon Karpoon*, Matt. xxi. 34. are phrases communicating precisely similar ideas, and with regard to time or season, the ideas are the same. Both of them signify the season of harvest, or the time of gathering in the respective fruits.

I shall only mention one authority, out of many, in support of this interpretation. It is Dr. Macknight, in his Harmony of the Four Gospels, vol. 2, page 104.—“*Kairos buchoon*, properly signifies the season of gathering figs, as *Kairos toon Karpoon*, Matt. xxi. 34. signifies the season of gathering the fruits. In construing this passage, the latter clause must be joined with the words, *he came if haply he might find any thing thereon*: for the Evangelist tells us, that the season of gathering figs was not yet come, to shew that none had been taken off the tree, and consequently having its whole produce upon it, there was nothing improper in Christ's expecting fruit then.”

folly, their stupidity, sin and punishment. This, Jesus, who taught superior to men, and astonished them with his doctrine, imitates in this branch of his conduct. It is evident, that by the fig-tree, is intended the Jewish nation, the then church and people of God, who had long enjoyed the means of grace, and the most eminent privileges, both civil and sacred; its barrenness signifies their unfruitfulness, their ingratitude, baseness, rebellion, backsliding, and wickedness; by Christ's cursing it, is pointed out their awful doom, their extermination as a kingdom, their excision as a church, and their total ruin and dispersion through all nations. They, who were once the most favorite people of heaven, became the most contemptible people on earth. Are the savages in our wilderness, the inhabitants of Ethiopia, or the Hottentots upon the African sterile shores; are any of these so hated, so persecuted, so evil entreated, or so despised, as the barren, ejected, and dispersed Jews? Look upon the fig-tree, it withers, dies, and is no more; look upon the Jews for seventeen hundred years and more, and you are ready to say they are damned.

This horrid state of the Jews, a people favored of heaven above all nations of the earth, had been often delineated by their Messiah in the strongest images, and in striking parables of obvious application. An instance of which let us select from the twenty-first chapter of Matthew.

“ *A certain householder planted a vineyard, manured and hedged it, furnished it with every convenient building, every utensil, and every apparatus; in this fair and inviting situation he rented it to tenants; and when the time for receiving his income came, he sent his servants to collect it; the tenants having lived well, and by this time finding themselves rich, they supposed themselves the lords of the manor; they stood ready to dispute title; they beat one servant, killed another, stoned a third, and drove them off the land. Other servants were sent, the same treatment, and worse ensued. Lastly, he sent his son, in rational expectation that he would awe them into reverence and submission. But they were too far gone in wickedness to be reclaimed. When they beheld him, their wicked hearts exulted, saying, this is the heir, come, let us kill him and possess all. No sooner is their horrid resolve formed than executed.*” Our Lord applies this stinging parable in a pointed address to the Jews. *What is proper for the Lord of the vineyard to do to those men? Their guilty consciences constrain them to answer. He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and let it out to others who will render him the fruits in their seasons. Then saith Jesus to them, this justice will God perform; the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*

This same thing the prophet Isaiah had long before predicted, and in the most beautiful, moving, and eloquent manner represented. Attend to the picture he draws. *My well-beloved hath a vine-*

yard in a very fruitful hill; he fenced it, gathered out the stones thereof; planted it with the choicest vine; built a tower in the midst of it; and also made a wine-press therein; and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you betwixt me and my vineyard! What could have been done more for my vineyard that I have not done in it? Therefore, I will utterly destroy it and lay it waste; there shall come up briars and thorns in it; and the clouds shall rain no rain upon it. Thus the house of Israel was barren, wicked, and unprofitable, and destruction to the uttermost came upon them.

Having thus illustrated our Lord's intention in this action of blasting the barren fig-tree, it is easy to collect what instruction it affords, and what use we ought to make of it. The slightest consideration of it will serve to teach us these two lessons.

I. That where God grants eminent blessings, and affords the means of grace, he reasonably expects the fruits of holiness.

II. That unfruitfulness under the bounties of heaven, and the light and ordinances of the gospel, is a dangerous and evil condition. Our Saviour's coming to the tree to seek fruit, fully suggests the one; and his cursing it for its barrenness, the other.

In respect to the *first*, when God bestows his favors, he expects proper and suitable returns;

where he grants the means of grace, the gospel and its ordinances, he reasonably expects the fruit they are calculated to produce. How is it to be wished, that the generality of Christians were more sensible of this! If we lived more deeply under this impression, we should maintain a more lively sensation of the necessity of holiness and virtue; there would be hopes then we would make it more seriously our study and care to comply with the obligations of religion. Multitudes in the present day seem so regardless of practical piety, that it is to be feared they adjust their opinions to their conversation and conduct. They separate the branches of religion, and reduce its importance in such a manner, that their minds are quiet and easy, though their lives are exceedingly irregular. One, who is notoriously intemperate in drinking, yet he declares himself an honest man in all his dealings; this renders all peaceable and safe within. Another is addicted to profane swearing; but he thinks no harm, and is charitable, kind and benevolent, and this supports his hope. A third, covetous, griping, and unjust; yet he prays, goes constantly to church, and his seat is never empty at sacrament; his peace is joy, and his hope assurance. A fourth carries a bitter, censorious, false, flattering and backbiting tongue; but he was convinced and converted in mode and form, at such a time and place; therefore, his mountain stands strong, and his comfort cannot be shaken by little immoralities. A fifth is mean, churlish, peevish, trou-

blesome, and vexatious to his family and all around him; but he can tell an excellent story of experiences, therefore, his conscience calmly basks on the mountains of tranquility, without any painful fears or doubts. Thus deluded man poises virtues against vices, balances down immoralities with greater religion, calms the surges of his conscience, and floats down the current of perdition.

If, my brethren, we attend more to reason and revelation, and less to the false dictates and prejudices of our own corrupted hearts, we should surely be better Christians. We should be effectually convinced that God has immoveably fixed the uniform religion and obedience of his rational creatures at too high a value to dispense with any branch of them. Universal holiness and righteousness are of such infinite moment with God, that he sent his only begotten Son to suffer and die for the world, in order that men should be made holy, and reduced to the obedience of the laws of rectitude and purity. With this view he has granted the revelation of his will—his sabbaths, statutes and the means of grace. He instructs by his word—admonishes by his providence—alarms by his threatenings—allures by his promises, and deals with us by his holy spirit. Surely God has high designs in conferring rich temporal mercies, and spiritual immunities, privileges, and blessings upon his people and his church. It is that they may be fruitful, rich in good works, pure and holy in all manner of conversation.

Does the husbandman plow and sow without view to a crop? Does he dig, manure and dress his vineyard without expectation of fruit? God is often, in holy writ, compared to a husbandman; the reason is obvious, and the above queries sufficiently suggest it. Can we suppose that the majesty of heaven, who does not suffer the abuse of temporal mercies to pass unpunished, will not resent the misimprovement of spiritual and heavenly things? Did he display the light of his glorious gospel only that a rebellious and obstinate world might shut their eyes against it, and harden their hearts? Did he give his Son, his only begotten Son, that the Jews and Gentiles might first shed his blood, and the more impious and ungrateful Christians afterwards trample on it as an unholy thing? Does he bestow his spirit to move upon the heart merely to be quenched and grieved?—Surely such conduct is a contradiction of heaven, and a reception of its grace in vain.

Are there any expectations of God, in consequence of his bestowment of great and eminent blessings, improper or unreasonable? Is it not infinitely just and fit that he should expect a due improvement of the means and advantages we enjoy? That we should be grateful for his benefits? That we should love him, and render him the most chearful duty and obedience of heart and life? That we should walk by the light of his revelation, believe in Christ, submit to the gospel, renounce sin and the world, and be no longer slaves to them?

These things are the dictates of reason and scripture. Our wickedness cannot hurt God, nor our righteousness profit him; yet an holy God expects the fruits of holiness from us. How often does the blessed Saviour compare his word to seed, and his hearers to ground, which he pronounces good or bad according as it does, or does not bring forth fruit?—The gospel every where testifies that the great end of all the benefits of God the Father and God the Son to men, is, *that being made free from sin, and become the servants of God, they should have their fruit unto holiness, and, in the end, everlasting life.*

Now, my brethren, look into your hearts and lives. You enjoy all the means of grace and salvation. Are you made better by them? You have the word of God to read, and it is abundantly preached unto you. Do they make any proper impression upon your hearts, are you sanctified by them? Are you awakened to any serious concern about your souls? Do you make conscience of prayer and the duties of piety and devotion? Are you diligent in moral and relative duties? Are you peaceable neighbors, comfortable friends, good husbands, affectionate wives, faithful parents, dutiful children, kind masters, and obedient servants? Are your hearts thus established in grace, your lives shining in godliness, and your fruits the fruits of righteousness?

After all the pains of heaven, and the mercies God hath bestowed upon you—after all the love

of God—the sufferings of Christ—the strivings of the spirit—the labors of ministers, and the prayers and tears of parents, are there not many of you still under the power and dominion of sin, in the gall of bitterness, and bonds of iniquity? Remember, O sinners, your day of grace and mercy will come to an end! If you spend the residue of life, as that which is past, who can paint the horror of the ruin and destruction which will be your fate? Your meditations ought to be infinitely interested in these things. This will be readily discerned, and glare like sun-beams from a sea of glass, in the next observation; that,

II. Upon Christ's cursing the fig-tree, it was immediately blasted, and perished from the roots. From hence we infer, that barrenness or unfruitfulness, under the blessings and ordinances of the gospel, and the means of grace, is an awful and dangerous State. Hear what St. Paul says in this case; *The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God; but that which beareth thorns and briars is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned.* Attend to the words of our Lord, the deciding and final judge of the conduct of men. *Behold, these three years, I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none; cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?* Oh! how soon may a poor careless sinner be hardened into a reprobate sense, and hurled into irretrievable wo! Soon the

day of grace may set, and rise with you no more for ever! You may exhaust eternity in excruciating groans, *That the harvest is past, and the summer is ended, and we are not saved.*

Behold, O careless sinner, the barren and fallen leaves around you! How many are drying up from the roots, and dropping into the invisible world? Some dying in a miserable—some in a doubtful state; some in the full career of their sins, and others amidst the purposes of future repentance.—Dost thou, O barren sinner, dare the justice, omnipotence and jealousy of Almighty God? Or dost thou still foolishly presume on despised grace and insulted mercy? He who spared not the angels who fell—who spared not his only son, will he spare you, O stupid Christians, who persist, in defiance of light, to despise his grace and mercy? He that spared not his chosen people, the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob his friends:—What? Shall the question drop from my lips? Will he spare and save you?—No. The blinded mind, and even the seared conscience must spurn the thought. Alas! is the indignation of heaven—the wrath, tribulation and anguish from the eternal king lost, as the passing wind, upon you? Have the torments of hell no terror? Arouse, O barren soul! open thine eyes! shake thyself! flee destruction, before thou art inwrapped in liquid sheets of endless flames!

If preaching, and the other ordinances of God, cannot effect your adamant hearts, and bring

forth the penitential resolve, and induce you, in sincerity, to yield up your hearts to the blessed Jesus, to walk in the ways of righteousness, and to become fruitful Christians, attend the dying rooms of barren souls, closing their eyes upon all terrestrial things! Follow them in your contemplations to the land of darkness; and, in your retired moments, consider their final doom, and ask yourselves, where is it probable they are gone? See how friends and relatives bend over the departing life; they render strong groans for weak; they sigh at the intervals; they restrain their own breath to hear the departing—the long intermitted gasp returns no more! Loud laments fill the chambers—open the creaking, groaning doors—flash through the inferior apartments—burst forth in horrid peals, and follow the barren spirit down to eternal perdition!—*Now is the accepted time—now is the day of salvation*—is the last voice to gospel reprobates this side hell!

Lord, have mercy upon us! Amen.



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S E R M O N XLIX.

O N H O N E S T Y.

B Y

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H E B R E W S xiii. 18.

We trust we have a good conscience, in all things, willing to live honestly.

THAT kind of beauty, which arises from harmony and proportion, is in no writings so visible or so perfect as in the holy scriptures. The religion therein revealed to mankind, is a system of perfect and universal order and harmony. There is such a sacred connexion between the truths and duties, such a regular dependance of one part upon another, that any disadjustment or neglect of one, mars the general symmetry, and produces a measure of deformity and confusion. There is a just and universal tendency in the *whole*, to the same uniform effect and end; and every particular truth and duty unites to promote the ultimate design of the *whole*. In this system, there is no

interference in the several branches of truth or duty; one truth or duty does not juggle out another; each has its proper place and proper consequence; and, therefore, calculated in infinite wisdom to answer the general and great intention, which is the glory of God and the perfection and felicity of intelligent creatures. Those truths and duties, which relate to God, stand as the first principles of the system; those, which relate to ourselves and our neighbor, arise as infallible and necessary consequences from these. And so strict and certain is the connexion, that the whole is injured by an infringement of the consequences, as of the principal parts.

Thus is true religion described in the sacred oracles; and thus it is when transferred to the heart by the operations of the Holy Spirit. Religion in the heart, in some good degree, corresponds to religion in the word, as face answers to face in a glass. As the truths and duties of religion, promote piety to God, and an holy regard to the Lord Jesus Christ, so they also produce a due respect to, and a practical observance of every social virtue. Hence, how beautiful and amiable is a truly religious character! One branch of religion doth not exclude another; a Christian's respect and duty to God is so far from injuring, that above all things it promotes his duty to his neighbor. It is the divine commandment, *that he should love his neighbor as himself*; and he that loveth God,

will keep his commandments.—On the other hand, duty and respect to his neighbor, or the practice of social duties will never preclude or diminish his regard to God, or the duties of devotion. Every duty holds its proper place in the general system. Love to God, and faith in Christ Jesus, oblige us to treat our neighbor with propriety; and our honest and virtuous conduct towards our neighbor will never allow us to enjoy the approbation of our own minds, or to have a good conscience, without a supreme regard and duty to God.

From this view of things, it is evident that all appearances of religion are defective and wrong, which do not promote the duties incumbent upon us in our social connexions as men and christians. The more religion reigns in the heart towards God, the more love and duty will increase towards our neighbor; with more care and diligence will the social duties be cultivated and discharged. That religion, which is of the operation of God, purifies the heart from the old leaven of malice, wickedness, dishonesty and unrighteousness, and forms the soul to the love and practice of candor, charity, goodness, integrity and uprightness. All religious affections and exercises, unaccompanied with the moral virtues, are delusive and spurious. Holiness and social virtue are inseparable in the nature of things, and in the revelation of heaven to man. The former cannot exist without the latter, nor can the latter be genuine and durable without the for-

mer. Some persons in great zeal and apparent warmth in religious and devotional exercises, will speak meanly of morality and social virtue, and others again will cry up morality and social duties as all in all. But both these are deviations from that real religion which secures peace of conscience and leads to everlasting life. The holy scriptures teach us, that the practice of piety, godliness, social virtue, and morality, are all beautifully connected, and go hand in hand. They no where admit of such notions of religion as exclude morality, nor such a preference and practice of morality as weakens or supercedes the obligations of religion in its most exalted branches or spiritual exercises. Each must possess its due influence on the Christian life in all proper exercise, frames and practice. Accordingly we find our Lord and his apostles always inculcating the duties of both tables upon their hearers. Our divine Redeemer, when he exhibits a comprehensive view of the whole duty of man, and of the requisitions of heaven, does it in this manner. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself.* And the great St. Paul, the supposed author of this epistle to the Hebrews, who was eminent for his displaying and dwelling upon the doctrines of grace, is no less distinguished for his enforcing the social virtues, and enjoining the duties of morality. He recommends them in general, agreeably to the example of his master, *in love to our neighbor*; and he enlarges throughout his letters upon every parti-

cular branch of social and relative duty. And here, in the words of our text, with great propriety and energy, he recommends the virtue of honesty.— This is a part of Christian morality of a superior kind. Without it we cannot expect the favor of God, the friendship and esteem of mankind, nor peace in our own minds, in moments of sober reflection. When the apostle hopes, with regard to himself and these Hebrew Christians, that they had a good conscience, he strongly intimates that the goodness of their conscience arose from the disposition they had to practise this amiable and necessary virtue. *We trust we have a good conscience, in all things, willing to live honestly.* Sincere desires and endeavors to live honestly, both procure a good conscience, and are evidences of it. A good conscience is a sweet companion and a continual entertainment; it brings in a large revenue of tranquillity, satisfaction, joy and consolation to the breast in which it dwells, under the frowns of the world, and all the varying aspects of divine providence.

Honesty is a Christian virtue of a very general nature; it extends to all the relations which take place among the children of men. But, in particular, it refers to our commerce, bargains, promises and dealings, one with another. It is truly a melancholy recollection, that there are so many violations of this virtue among mankind, especially among them who name the name of Christ, and

have thereby obliged themselves to depart from all iniquity. The considerations by which it is recommended to us, from reason and religion, however convincing and numerous, are not always powerful enough to impress the conscience, and hold us to the steady observation of honesty in our conduct. Such is the degeneracy of human nature, and so deeply are the seeds of depravity implanted in our souls, that slight occasions oftentimes prove victorious temptations to dishonesty, weaken our regards to righteousness, and lead us to injure our fellow-creatures. But to render our consciences more tender—to enable them more faithfully to perform their office—to cause us to avoid and abhor dishonesty more, and to strengthen our resolutions in favor of integrity, let us, a little, in the

First place, open the fountains from whence dishonesty flows.

Then, *secondly*, mention some considerations and motives to induce us to be conscientiously honest in all our employments, business and conversation.

First, In order to illustrate the excellency and importance of this virtue of honesty, we shall point out some of the fountains from whence the opposite vice flows, or some of the chief causes of dishonesty. Opposites frequently illustrate each other to great advantage. The beauty and charms of Christian virtue gain strength by arousing, in us, an indignation and abhorrence of mean, base and

immoral practices. Honesty will appear more noble, honorable and God-like, by awakening a proper disgust and hatred of the odious deformity of dishonesty.

With regard to the chief springs of dishonesty, they may be contemplated both in a general and particular view. Under a general consideration, dishonesty arises from the same common source with all other kinds of abominations and iniquities. It arises from the awful depravity and corruption of the human heart, which *is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*; and from whence, according to our Lord's account, *proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies*. An evil fountain, indeed, that sends forth such streams of pollution!—But the more particular causes of dishonesty are such things as these.

1. Slothfulness, idleness and an aversion to labor and the business of our calling. In some, this vice may be considered, in a measure, as constitutional. They are naturally slothful and sluggish. They incline to do nothing with a proper spirit, either serviceable to themselves or others. In others it is contracted and acquired. They are naturally active enough; but, by improper management, by indulgence of a wandering fancy, by contracting a fondness for company and folly, they become impatient of application to business; they feel a reluctance to the confinement of labor

and of their occupation; industry is relinquished; an inattention to their word, and a breach of promises follow. These are in great danger of practising dishonesty in one sort or another. They offer a thousand untrue, dishonest and shuffling excuses to their employers for not having done their work—they lose their custom—their circumstances become pressing and uneasy—they can obtain credit no longer—they must have a livelihood—therefore, recourse must be had to some dishonest methods to obtain it. Hence they are tempted to over-reaching, cheating, defrauding, pilfering, and even, perhaps, to notorious theft and robbery.—They imagine evil upon their beds, and study schemes of dishonesty. This was the unhappy case of the unjust steward. To work he had not been used, and to beg he was ashamed; hence he resolves immediately to practise knavery and dishonesty. Behold, how readily evil devices occur to a proud man averse and refused from labor.—The forsaking of industry is the abandoning of honesty. How many are there whose honor and pride would be mortally wounded by returning to their trades or manual labor, and yet in the full gratification of their pride, and in consistence with their honor, falsely so called, they can be guilty of the most crafty, lying and villanous practices. O honor! how art thou prostituted and perverted! The greatest dishonor and disgrace to human nature must now be submitted to, rather than an honest and honorable application to the business of

our callings. If our notions of religion should become as wild and extravagant, as the notions of many are of honor, it will soon come to pass that the greatest villain will be deemed the most religious man.

Industry, and a careful attention to our employments in life, are of essential importance to true honor and honesty; and they are equally so to real religion and Christian morality. Idleness is an exuberant fountain of a multitude of evils. It contains not a tint of virtue or piety. It is an evil, pure and unmixed: It contains not a spice of religion, morality, honor or honesty. What must be the streams flowing from such an *avernian* source? All polluted, odious, and to be detested. Let every Christian turn away his head with abhorrence of the idol of indolence. Attend to St. Paul's address to the fauntering Christians in Thessalonica. *We hear there are some among you that walk disorderly, and work not at all, but are busy, and yet idle bodies; we command and exhort such by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness, they work and eat their own bread, and those who will not work; What does he say? Does he grant them an allowance of dishonest and shifting contrivances; No, they should starve, they should not eat.*

Now, my brethren, let us abhor idleness and laziness as odious vices, and the sources of horrid evils in time and in eternity. Let us be peculiarly careful to innure ourselves, and form our chil-

dren to habits of application and industry. Let us oblige them to a steady attendance upon their schools, and to such business as every year of their age is capable of. The great bulk of mankind are made or ruined, in soul and body for ever, before they are eighteen years of age. Hence, the wisest states, the most religious churches, and most christian governments, have employed their chief and principal care upon children and youth. *Train up a child in the way wherein he should go, and when he becomes old he will not depart from it.*

The *second* fountain and cause of dishonesty is avarice or covetousness. The influence of this vice hurries many persons into a thousand wicked and unrighteous practices. This unbounded desire of getting cannot be removed but by dishonest gratifications. Hence people are tempted to take what is not their due, or withhold what is due to others. They pursue dishonest measures to pinch from, or over-reach those with whom they deal. It is to this horrid root of bitterness, the false balance and deceitful beam owe their invention. Hence the seller puts off damaged wares for good, and the buyer, false money or counterfeited currency. This avaricious temper disposes the tradesman to work up base materials in a sligh-ty manner, and to impose upon the ignorance and credulity of his employer. This causes one to take the advantage of the present necessity of another, and obliges him either to dispose of, or pur-

chase at an improper value. Covetousness tempts persons to prevaricate, truckle, flatter and lie in their dealings; to break their promises, and delay their payments to their customers or creditors. The same dishonest humor makes men bring in extortionate bills, and overcharge for their services. What a world of iniquity, dishonesty and injustice flow from this awful source! Here we see the propriety of the frequent cautions we have from Christianity, *to beware of covetousness.*

A *third* fountain of dishonesty originates in luxury and extravagance. When persons live above their income, and their expences exceed their circumstances; when they attempt to shine at home and abroad in pomp and equipage, with those of better business and superior fortunes: What can be the consequence? Bankruptcy or dishonesty must be the necessary issue. From hence they borrow without designs of payment, and run into debt without a rational prospect of discharging it. Many support their prodigality at the expence of their creditors, and the ruin of their families. This vice drives some to gaming, and other practices of bad report, with a view of hasty and dishonest gains; and thus it becomes an awful source of dishonor, wretchedness, and misery.

Fourthly, Another fountain of dishonesty I shall mention, is pride and selfishness. These had a deep share in the first transgression, and probably had great influence in the fall both of angels and

men. These produce dishonesty towards our brethren of mankind of every sort; but more especially in regard to their persons and reputation. Pride tempts men to refuse due respect to their superiors, to be haughty to their equals, and to show a supercilious contempt of their inferiors.—Selfishness cannot bear the preference of another—it grows uneasy, and swells into dissatisfaction at his advancement or prosperity. It is hard to treat a proud and selfish man with reverence, submission and obeisance. When you are obliged to bow and cringe before him, and bite the lip, it is not in nature or grace, not to despise him in your inmost soul.

It is pride also that raises envy at the growing fame of a neighbor, and induces to the spreading abroad of dishonorable things to his disadvantage. It takes an ill-natured satisfaction in seeing him mortified or brought down. Pride and selfishness often produce a malicious and revengeful temper, which is frequently an origin of much dishonesty. Malice and revenge form a detestable character, and near a-kin to hell. It is impossible, without horror, to relate the dreadful extremes these passions will carry persons to, in whom they prevail. They often stick at nothing, however dishonorable, shocking and inhumane, for their gratification. They direct to slandering, backbiting, stabbing another's good name. They destroy the peace of neighborhoods, dissolve the bonds

of friendship, break asunder the ties of blood, and affinity, scatter abroad firebrands, arrows and death, and work dishonesty with greediness, and feel the tormenting pleasure which the damned enjoy. Let some unhappy occasion open this source of ill, immediately all the faults, infirmities and blemishes of a worthy and good character will be proclaimed and aggravated; his best, most Christian and beneficent actions will be misrepresented and debased; confidences disregarded; secrets blazed and published; and the whole course of nature set on fire. Behold dishonesty, what a horrid spectre! It creates damnation in the soul, and turns earth into hell. Let us quit the odious and awful object, and proceed—

Secondly, To bring forward some considerations and motives to induce us to be conscientiously honest in all our employments, business and conversation with our fellow-men.

Can we now think a dishonest thought, contrive a dishonest scheme, or be guilty of a dishonest action? Consider the right every man has to enjoy his own, by the laws of nature, reason, religion and society, in respect to his person, property and character. These blessings are the benefactions of heaven to all. Their right to the undisturbed possession of them is founded upon the grant of the God of nature and of grace. To hesitate about the title of the lawful owner's quiet enjoyment of them, is to dispute the right of the supreme and

independent proprietor, the Lord Almighty. Therefore, all fraudulent and dishonest practices, from the evil thought in the mind to the highest acts of outrageous violence, are a reversion of the orders of heaven, a condemnation of equity and wisdom, and an invasion of the throne of God. It is as a poet inimitably expresses himself in another case, to

“Snatch from his hands the balance and the rod,
“Rejudge his justice, be the God of God.”

Will the Almighty Sovereign see his creatures and his children rifled of their immunities and blessings, which his goodness and bounty hath conferred upon them, and not conceive resentment? Will he not whet his glittering sword, and his hand lay hold on vengeance? Let all dishonest persons tremble; the eternal God will assert his own prerogative, and maintain the sacred rights of honesty.

Further consider, sincerity and honesty are the very bonds which hold society together. The religious observation of these virtues are the great means to advance its real interests. From whence it is plain, that the neglect or disuse of them, must destroy the advantages of society, and threaten its very existence. A dishonest person is a public nuisance, and may be viewed as a common enemy to mankind. None are safe from injuries who have any commerce or dealings with him. Can

there be such monsters in nature as professing Christians, and yet dishonest men? They sap the foundations of church and state, and are more dangerous than open and declared foes. An avowed enemy may be an honest man, but a deceitful friend cannot. What society, either civil or religious, can be secure, where dissingenuity and dishonesty are practised by its members? Can we hold such in estimation, or think favorably of them? How contrary is dishonesty to the treatment we wish and expect from mankind? We resent it, when done to ourselves; how should we avoid it in all our traffick with others? Let us never, in any instance, act a dishonest part, or be guilty of a conduct contrary to humanity, reason and christianity.

Lastly, Consider the practice of dishonesty is prohibited in a thousand instances in the word of God. The divine wrath is revealed against it, both in his declarations, and in many examples recorded in the sacred history. *That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, saith the Lord thy God, Ye shall not steal nor deal falsely, nor lie one to another. Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbor nor rob him. The wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning. Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in weight, or in measure. A just balance and just weights shall ye have. The royal preacher informs us, That an unjust weight is an abomination to the Lord. Wo to him, saith the most*

high by the prophet, *who buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; who useth his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work.* What doth the Lord say to Christians, by the apostle James, of dishonest gains? *Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat up your flesh as fire. Ye have heaped up treasure together for the last days. Behold the hire of the laborers which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth, and the cries of them which have reaped, are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.*

Read the vengeance of heaven against dishonest men. Consider the end of Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness. Behold the fate of an oppressive and dishonest Pharaoh. What insincerity, forfeiture of honor, breach of promises, and cruelty formed his character! And how was his kingdom deluged in blood by the slaying of the first-born; and himself and his whole host overwhelmed in the Red Sea! View the dogs licking the blood of Ahab, in the very place where he shed innocent blood, that he might dishonestly possess himself of his neighbor's vineyard. But there would be no end of retailing horrid instances of this kind.

Let us turn our eyes to our divine master upon this head, contemplate his conduct, and the design of the holy religion he instituted. Plain and solemn are his commands upon the mount, as also

on other occasions, *that honesty be practised between man and man.* He has given us an admirable, easy and universal rule of honesty, in that ever-memorable and golden maxim, *All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them, for this is the law and the prophets.* How beautiful, excellent and obvious to application is this divine direction! What a system of Christianity is here! And whole codes of morality cannot express more. Do unto all as ye would desire they should do unto you, were you in their circumstances, and they in your's, then you will be honest men and good Christians. Dreadful is the curse which Jesus pronounces upon the dishonest religionists of his day. *Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye pay tythe of mint and annise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith!* that is, ye are neither charitable, honest, nor true believers. Your neglecting honesty towards your fellow-creatures under the specious pretences of high religion, much devotion, and long prayers, will only bring down more awful vengeance upon your devoted heads. *God hates robbery and injustice, he abhors dishonesty, even for burnt-offerings.* The covetous and extortionate are shut out of heaven, and the unjust and dishonest of every complexion shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Consider the sweet, the blessed, and perfect example of Jesus, the mighty Lord and Saviour of

the world. Behold him submitting to virtuous honesty—rendering to all their dues—tribute to whom tribute was due—custom to whom custom—fear to whom fear; and universal love and benevolence to all mankind. He rendered tribute to Cæsar, subjected himself in all duty to his earthly parents, loved his brethren, and practised, in all things, the most unstained honesty and perfect righteousness.

The great design and tendency of the gospel is to inspire us with an inviolable attachment to piety, morality and the most exalted honesty. Does not the grace of God, which hath appeared unto all men, teach us to deny all ungodliness, and every worldly lust, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present evil world? Can they pretend to be Christians—to be followers of the pure and holy Jesus, and form expectations of the celestial rewards, who live in deceit and insincerity, and practise injustice and dishonesty? Dishonest men are a blemish to Christianity, and a disgrace to our holy religion.

Now from the considerations and motives laid before us, let us all be exhorted, my dear brethren, to be persons of integrity, uprightness, and strict justice. Let us be honest men—let us keep consciences void of offence towards God and man—let us have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. *Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are love,*

ly, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Persons are often censured in our churches for drunkenness, fornication, &c. but who is ever censured for dishonesty, a crime of a deeper dye? Men may be guilty of a thousand things which are not fair and upright, and no notice taken of them.—Yea, they may deceive their neighbor—impose upon him—prove false to their word—break their promises—withhold his dues, and not only pass uncensured, but be charitably deemed by many as pretty good Christians, though none will trust them as strictly honest. Let us abhor all mean, low and double dealings: Keep yourselves far removed from such evil practices. Attend to honorable industry; be diligent in your callings and occupations, but make not haste to be rich. Let us be careful to keep our children employed, and our youth to business. I would be far from debarring youth from just and rational recreations. But there is a wide difference between proper recreations, and sauntering, mischievous idleness.—Remember, industry prevents much vice; is a security to good morals, and the hand-maid of religion.

Let us beware of avarice in ourselves, and guard all under our care, whether children, apprentices or others from evil company—from luxury, pride and extravagance as far as in our power. What fills our goals, but laziness, folly, an aversion from

work, extravagance, prodigality and drunken bargains? The truly unfortunate, the frugal and industrious, who arise not above their business, and yet by adverse providences are carried to those apartments of calamity, are very few. What causes the massy chains to clank in our gloomy dungeons, but horrid dishonesty?—I forbear the pursuit of the rising awful ideas.—Where can I find a pause in this exuberant theme?—I must break off, though to finish the subject is impossible. Indulge me to leave it in the sententious counsel of the prophet. And Oh! that it might be indelibly written as with the point of a diamond upon each of your hearts! *Do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.*

May this counsel form our character, and evidence our hopes of glory. Amen.



S E R M O N L.*

THE REWARD OF INIQUITY:

B Y

UZAL OGDEN, A. M.

Rector of Trinity Church, in Newark, New-Jersey.

ON this solemn occasion, I fully expected, and hoped, that my reverend and very worthy brother, the minister of this church, would, from this place, have addressed you; his necessary absence, however, from town, almost the whole of this week, and other circumstances, prevented him from the discharge of that sacred service, which has devolved on me. Though, through my absence also, from this place, but a few hours have elapsed since I was requested thus to appear before you, a sense of duty would not suffer me to decline the request, even under the disadvantages which attend so sudden a notice to discharge so important an office. It is not the applause of men I covet; and while I solicit the candor of this large

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* Delivered at Newark, in the new Presbyterian Church, May 6, 1791, at the execution of WILLIAM JONES, for the murder of SAMUEL SHOTWELL.

and respectable audience, I assure them that I shall not attempt to deliver an elaborate discourse; but beg leave to lay before them a few serious facts and observations, which may have a tendency to cause the present solemnity to have its desired effect.

The words of sacred writ which occur to me as pertinent to this occasion, you will find in the ixth chapter of the book of Genesis at the 6th verse. *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.*

Without any further observations, I shall,

- I. Consider the nature of murder.
- II. Attend to some of its causes.
- III. Notice the punishment due to murder.
- IV. Regard the ends of this punishment.

First, I am to attend to the nature of murder.

It is a crime, it may be observed, which, with us, nothing can excuse. If a man is injured in his property, reputation or person, the law of this land of freedom and good government, will afford him redress.

Murder is expressly forbidden by the laws of God and man. The Almighty, in great mercy, hath guarded the lives of men, the works of his hands, by the most positive injunctions. In Exodus xx. 13. we thus read; *Thou shalt not kill*; and our Saviour sanctions this divine authority by repeat-

ing it, Matt. xix. 18. *Thou shalt do no murder; thou shalt not commit adultery, &c.* The man, says God, who shall murder his brother shall be punished. *At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.* And, to name no more places, from the great number which might be cited, in the words of our text, God, very particularly, forbids this crime under the pain of death. *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.* It is worthy of remark, that still further to prevent the perpetration of this sin, under the Mosaic dispensation, even the beast that killed a man was to be put to death; and of those animals which it was lawful for men to eat, they were prohibited to eat the blood, because it was the life of them.

Murder, suffer it further to be observed, is an offence of great magnitude against both God and man; it bids defiance to all authority, human and divine. In the words following the text, a reason is given why this crime should not be committed; *for, in the image of God made he man.* Man is not only the creature of God, but the only being, on earth, upon which he instamped his heavenly image; to destroy this image from the earth, is to take from it every thing that is godly; this must be an heinous offence; it is a manifest opposition to the will of heaven; and though God says, *I have made man for my glory;* the murderer, by his conduct declares, (with regard to one individual at

least) man shall not exist: God shall not be glorified by him! Against society or the state, the offence is great. A state is composed of individuals; and unjustly to take away the life of an individual, is a sort of treason against the community at large; it is an attack on the commonwealth, and it deprives the state, for ever, of a fellow-citizen; of all his time, talents and usefulness, and, therefore, in some degree, lessens its power and respectability. Against a family, the evil is often more sensibly felt, and cannot be compensated. Who, but God, can restore to the aged father and mother, the son of their love? or, to the affectionate wife, the companion of her bosom? or, to the helpless children, their father, their counsellor, and support? With respect to the party murdered, how enormous is the crime! It robs him of the most valuable thing on earth, life; precipitates him, prepared or unprepared, into the world of spirits; for ever fixes the state of his soul, and to him the most serious consequence may be, death eternal!

Under this head, I shall only further notice, that such is the crime of murder, that human nature revolts at the very idea of it; that, in the divine esteem, it may be committed in thought as well as by deed; and that, even by the laws of our land, it may be perpetrated, when some may flatter themselves, though their murderous deed shall be proved, yet, by the law, they cannot be con-

victed. It is a circumstance that merits attention, (as appeared on the trial of the unhappy culprit present) that personal, positive testimony of one or more witnesses, is not necessary, to ground the charge of murder. If such evidence was necessary, as was justly remarked, by one of the counsel in behalf of the State, whose life would be safe? for murder is generally committed in secrecy.—Circumstances alone, when clear and strong, are sufficient to convict of this offence; particularly, as the honorable court observed, should a person be found to have suddenly expired in a room, and, at that instant, should a man issue from thence, with a sword reeking with blood, this circumstance would be sufficient to affix on him the charge of murder. I mention this to apprize the ignorant and vicious of a snare they may fall into, while insensible of danger!

As the crime of murder is thus of great magnitude, and so abhorrent to God and man, it may not be unuseful, as I purposed,

To attend to some of the causes of this sin.

This, I apprehend, is seldom or never committed, till men are greatly depraved; till all sense of moral goodness is almost totally effaced; until vice, in them, reigns predominant; for such is the deformity of vice, in general, that the person not grown grey in iniquity, shudders at the very thought of committing it.

But how does the repeated practice of evil obliterate from the mind, every virtuous sentiment, and render man, in point of moral goodness, but little superior, perhaps, to the infernal spirits! Our Saviour regards incorrigible sinners to be the children of their father the devil, whose works they will do!

Among the vices which the soonest, and which most effectually debase and pollute human nature, we may, perhaps, number profane swearing and drunkenness, which are often occasioned through a neglect of private and public devotion, and evil company.

When men are so degraded, that they fear not God nor regard man, the immediate causes of murder, in general, are, I conceive, the love of money; the expectation of some earthly good, or the spirit of revenge.

But before the murderer commits the awful deed, would he pause a moment, and consider that the eye of God, at least, is upon him; that, thro' the justice of divine Providence, the murderer, even in this world, seldom escapes with impunity; and would he consider also, the present punishment only, that awaits his guilt, how would he flee from the commission of so atrocious a deed?

This leads me, next, to pay attention to the punishment of murder.

By the laws of God and man, the life of the murderer is required. No tears—no prayers—no penitence—no intercession of others, nor any less punishment than death, can be accepted. *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed!—He that smiteth a man, so that he die, says the divine word, shall surely be put to death!—The murderer shall surely be put to death!—Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer.—If, in enmity, a man smiteth another with his hand that he dieth, he shall surely be put to death; for he is a murderer. If a man hate his neighbor, and lie in wait for him, and smite him mortally that he die, thine eye shall not pity him; but thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood!—And how many threatenings hath God denounced against the murderer? The Lord, says David, will abhor the bloody man! Bloody men shall not live out half their days. And murderers are numbered among those finners, who shall have their part in that lake of fire and brimstone, which burneth for ever and ever!*

Their punishment of temporal death, is truly awful. To be exposed to public shame!—To be torn from mother, brother, sister, every friend.—From every earthly good! To be cut off, as in the present instance, in the flower of youth!* To go down with infamy to the grave, as a pest to society—as one unworthy of life,—how wretched the state! Harassed too by the terrors of a guilty conscience, from which he cannot flee; and, unless

* The culprit was in the twenty-seventh year of his age.

pardoned by God, through the merits of Christ, to be covered with everlasting infamy; eternally to endure the anguish of remorse, and all the effects of the divine displeasure; to sustain all the inconceivable miseries of eternal condemnation—how great the wo—how insupportable the thought! But such is justly the doom of the impenitent murderer!

But, is it enquired, Wherefore is he now punished?

I shall, in the last place, attend to the answer.

Certainly he is not here punished to gratify a spirit of malice or revenge! He is not held up as a spectacle of misery that, by men, he may suffer insult, nor that they may rejoice in his misery! Far from it!—But to impress on the minds of men a sense of the malignity of the crime of murder; to deter them from the commission of a deed so horrid; and, therefore, the punishment is inflicted in the most public manner; *That all Israel* (that every person in the state) *may bear and fear, and do not such wickedness!* The murderer is also punished, that the community may retain its dignity, and escape the vengeance of God. *Blood, we read, defileth the land; and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.* For the honor, therefore, of our country and its laws; for the good and safety of the commonwealth; and to avoid the frowns of a righteous and holy God, the awful sentence is executed;

the sacrifice cannot be dispensed with; and, indeed, not to punish murder, when in our power, is, in some degree, tacitly to approve of the crime, and to become partakers of the guilt!

Having thus, in a very summary way, noticed the crime of murder—some of the causes of it—its punishment, and the ends of this punishment, I shall proceed to improve the subject.

1. How sensibly are we convinced, by every crime, but especially, by that of murder, of the depravity of human nature!—And how soon was this offence committed after the fall of man!—If human nature is thus depraved, while we perceive the necessity of the holy religion of Jesus; admire its benign intention, which is to prevent every crime; to restore men to purity, and to reconcile them to God—how grateful should we be for this dispensation of mercy; and what an holy abhorrence should be ours of those men, or those sentiments, which would subvert the Christian religion, and introduce deism, or licentious principles, in its stead!

2. It appears, from what hath been said, how necessary it is, if men regard their reputation—their present and future happiness, to revere the precepts of Christianity; and, especially, to avoid the indulgence of anger and drunkenness; which are among those evils which lead to the perpetration of murder! How frequently and expressly are these sins forbidden? *Wo unto them that rise up ear-*

ly in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue 'till night until wine enflame them! We are assured that the drunkard shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven! And, says Solomon drunkenness, at the last, biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. It deserves attention, that the unhappy effects of this vice were flagrantly manifest in these two causes, tried here so lately, on indictments for murder. The two unfortunate men who died, were intoxicated in death; the man convicted of man-slaughter, was also intoxicated when he committed the fact; and the person who is now condemned for murder, was much addicted to liquor, and had spent the night in revelling that preceded the day in which he stained his hands with blood!

With respect to anger. Is it not enjoined, that *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: Vengeance is mine and I will repay, saith the Lord.* We are exhorted to *put away all bitterness, anger and malice, to render not evil for evil; but to love even our enemies.* And anger, saith the wise man, *resteth in the bosom of fools.*

3. If parents regard the prosperity of their children, how should they teach them the principles of our holy religion; admonish them to avoid every vice; excite them by precept and example, to regard every duty; to *remember their Creator in the days of their youth!* Indeed, will not a different conduct be attended, in all probability, with the

most unhappy consequences; not only to the public in general, but to themselves in particular; and have they not just reason to fear the vengeance of heaven for the neglect of parental duty? Was not the house of Eli judged for ever, because his children made themselves vile, and he restrained them not?

4. How thankful to heaven should be those parents, whose children are preserved from the power of vice; who do honor to religion; and are a blessing to their country! How grateful, indeed, should be all who are kept from presumptuous sins! But should we not remember, that the wages of every sin, unrepented of, will be death eternal!

5. How should impious youth be warned by this unhappy example of evil, without delay, to forsake their sins, and to flee the wrath of God to come! Had this unfortunate man revered the dictates of reason and religion; had the pious admonitions of his mother been properly regarded, might he not have been ornamental to human nature and to religion; been a useful member of society; borne the name of his father with reputation; been *a crown of rejoicing* to his widowed, aged mother; supported her feeble steps in the decline of life; lived in happiness, and died in honor!—But, ah! through the indulgence of vice; through the forgetfulness of his God, how awfully the reverse!

Will you not, O youth! turn from his example in righteous indignation!—What would tempt you to take his place, to endure his punishment?—Let his folly, then, teach you wisdom; his indiscretion, inspire you with prudence!—Shun the fatal rock on which he split to his destruction!—For the honor of Christianity;—for the reputation and prosperity of the state, and as you regard your own reputation and happiness in this world, and in the next; and for the consolation of your parents also, be exhorted, be entreated, to forsake the thorny way of vice, and to tread the peaceful, happy path of virtue!

6. Turn your eyes, my brethren, and behold, a moment, the weeping, the disconsolate mother! Pity her wo! Sympathize with her in her distress! Despise her not; add not to her grief!

I have, lastly, to address a few words to you, sir, who are now the victim of justice!—Unhappy man!—For you we feel; for you we mourn!—Through the prevalence of vice, your heart became estranged from God! In sickness, you formed resolutions of amendment; but, I fear, in your own strength; for they *vanished like the morning cloud or early dew*; Thus you became more and more hardened in iniquity? God, in just displeasure, seemed almost totally to have forsaken you! Not having his fear before your eyes, by an indulgence of the passion of anger and revenge, you have murdered an inoffensive, harmless neighbor!—You say,

that you did not mean to take his life; that you had not murder in your heart! But, at least, was not your conduct towards him lawless, cruel, barbarous! In the estimation of God and man, it was murderous!—You honestly, however, confess the crime! You wish sinners may take warning by your example! You own the justice of your sentence! You are now to expiate your offence, agreeably to the express command of God, with your blood!—While the hand of justice is raised for execution, we lament your fate; we deplore your wretchedness!—Nothing consoles us but your penitence!—You say, you have spread your sins before God! That you heartily bewail them! That your only refuge is in the blood of Christ! That God hath spoken peace to your soul! That you believe your pardon is sealed in heaven! That your whole trust is in the mercy of God, through Christ! That you are resigned to your fate, and that you will leave the world with assured hopes of acceptance with God, through the righteousness of the merciful Saviour!

We hope your expectations of heaven are rational, scriptural! But, be not deceived! The adversary of souls is subtle! If you die in delusion you are lost for ever; must endure the miseries of eternal condemnation!

But if your hopes of salvation are just, how great and happy will be your change in a few moments! Bonds you will exchange for heavenly freedom! Infamy for honor! Pain for pleasure! Death for

life! You will add to the trophies of divine grace! With the murderous Manassah, and other sinners, you will join in the praises of redeeming love!

You certainly have no reason to despair of the mercy of heaven! *Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance! The broken and contrite heart will not be despised by the God of compassion!—Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted!* And if even some of the murderers of Christ embraced the faith, and found mercy, wherefore should you despair of salvation? For them Christ prayed; because with God there is mercy and plentifulness of redemption!

To God's tender mercy, through Christ, we commit you; and in your behalf, we humbly address the throne of grace!



S E R M O N L I.

T R U S T I N G O D.

B Y

JOHN WITHERSPOON, D. D. L. L. D.

Col. N. C. P.

I S A I A H I. IO.

Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.

IT is said of every real believer, that he walks by faith and not by sight. If this is true, it will follow, that his faith must be exposed to a variety of trials, while he continues in a world of sense. These trials arise from the state of his own mind—from his outward condition—from the state of the world with which he stands connected, and from the mutual influence of all these, one upon another. From this situation it is easy to see, that there are few duties, for the exercise of which, a good man will have greater or more frequent occasion, than that of trust and reliance upon God.

Trust is the duty and the refuge of the needy—of the dependent—of the weak—the timorous, and the distressed. How many are included under one or more of these characters; or rather, who is it that can say he is altogether excluded?

Agreeably to this, we need but open the sacred volume, to perceive how frequent the exhortations are to trust in God, and how many views are given us of his power, wisdom, mercy and faithfulness, to encourage us to an unshaken reliance. At the same time, I am sorry to say, that there are few duties which are more imperfectly understood by many professing Christians. Even pious persons often sin both on the right hand and on the left, that is to say, both by diffidence and presumption. I have, therefore, laid hold of this opportunity, and made choice of this passage of scripture, in order to open and illustrate a little this important duty of a servant of God. How seasonable it is you will easily perceive, for in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper we have set before us Christ Jesus the unspeakable gift of God—the great pledge of his love, and the great foundation of our reliance upon him, not only for his saving mercy in general, but for every necessary blessing in our way to eternal rest.

This passage of scripture is also well suited to the subject. It was spoken to the Jews in a lax and desolate age, when many had turned their backs upon the service of God—had deserted his

ordinances, and despised his servants, which is always an occasion both of affliction and temptation to his own children. This appears from the first words of the chapter. *For thus saith the Lord, where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? and which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities you have sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.* As also from the 3d and 4th verses. *I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.*

In discoursing further on this subject, it is proposed, through the assistance of divine grace,

I. To open a little the character and state of those who are called upon and exhorted to trust in the name of the Lord.

II. To explain the duty of trust, and point out the foundation of it.

III. To apply the subject for your instruction and comfort.

In the *first* place then, I am to open a little the character and state of those who are here called upon and exhorted to trust in the name of the Lord.

Their description is as follows: *Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light?*

let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God. It will help us to enter into the spirit and meaning of the prophet's words, if we keep in view the state of the Jewish church, hinted at a little ago. *Who is among you;* that is, if there is one or more—if there is a small select number in the midst of general corruption and depravity, who have kept their garments unpolluted, though iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxeth cold; *That feareth the Lord?* You know it is common in scripture to describe religion in general by some particular leading branch of it. The fear of God is often made use of for this purpose, as in that passage, there shall be no want to them that *fear him*. It may, therefore, signify those who have a sincere and unfeigned regard to the commandments of God, and have chosen him as their portion and hope. Those who desire and deserve to be distinguished from the profane despiser—the secure formalist, or the disguised hypocrite. Those, in a word, who are, and who desire to appear, to use the strong language of scripture, upon the Lord's side in every struggle, and who resolve with Joshua, that whatever others do, for their part they will serve the Lord.

But I cannot help thinking, we may also, with great safety, explain the words in a closer and stricter sense, and suppose, that by fearing the Lord is to be understood a due reverence for his infinite majesty, a humble veneration for his sacred author-

ity. This is a most excellent fence or guard to the conscience in an evil time, and a noble preservative from the spreading infection and insinuating poison of prevailing or fashionable sins. It is also the usual character of a desolute age to have cast off fear, to treat the most sacred things with scorn, and to look upon that holy solicitude to avoid sin, which appears in the carriage and language of a child of God, as a mark of meanness or weakness of mind. In such an age, one who fears God is well described by the prophet Isaiah. *But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*

The next part of the character is, *and obeyeth the voice of his servant*; that is to say, is willing to hearken to the message of God by the mouth of his servants. The words of the text, no doubt, may be considered as primarily referring to the inspired prophets, who bore an immediate commission, miraculously attested from God. Many, even of these, were set at nought, their message derided, and their persons insulted, when they attempted to stem the tide of prevailing vice, or boldly denounced the divine vengeance against high-handed sinners. But the sincerely pious obeyed their voice. I shall make no scruple to apply this to ourselves, and the present age. Our blessed Redeemer hath established in his church a standing ministry, and the regular administration of ordinances. And though we have this treasure

in earthen vessels, yet in no other way doth he now communicate his will, and vouchsafe his presence to his people, but by the reading and hearing of his word, and attendance upon his instituted worship. It will, no doubt, therefore be a part of the character of a good man, that he will love the ordinances, and obey the voice of the servants of God, that he will consider him who hath sent them, and receive instruction, not as the word of man, but as it is in deed and in truth the word of God.

On the other hand, when iniquity prevails, when irreligion and profaneness lift up their heads, one of the most usual concomitants, and one of the surest proofs of it is, a neglect of ordinances, and contempt of those who are concerned in their administration: How far this is at present the case, I leave to yourselves to judge. While I speak this, my brethren, I do by no means desire to see an ignorant people distracted by the gloomy terrors of superstition, or led blindfold by the enchanted cord of implicit faith. But sure I am, there is an extreme on either hand, and those who truly fear the Lord, will honor the persons, and obey the voice of such as plead his cause and speak in his name. You may rest assured, that though they neither deserve nor claim any authority on their own account, yet so long as they stand in the divine councils, and speak the divine word, their message will be attended with this awful sanction, *He that despiseth*

you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.

The last part of the character here drawn, which lays the foundation for the subsequent direction is, *that walketh in darkness and hath no light*. Darkness and light, besides their literal, have often a metaphorical sense in scripture. They are, indeed, used with a good deal of latitude and variety. But I think their metaphorical signification may be reduced to these two general heads. 1. Sometimes light signifies knowledge, and darkness signifies ignorance—as in Eph. v. 8. *Ye are sometimes darkness but now are ye light in the Lord, walk as children of light.* Acts xxvi. 18. *To turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.* Job xxxvii. 19. *Teach us what we shall say unto him, for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness.* 2. Sometimes darkness signifies distress or trouble, and the correspondent signification of light is deliverance and joy, as 2 Sam. xxii. 28, 29. *And the afflicted people thou wilt save, but thine eyes are upon the haughty that thou mayest bring them down, for thou art my lamp, O Lord, and the Lord will lighten my darkness.* Job xix. 8. *He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass; he hath put darkness in my paths.* Ps. xcvii. 11. *Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.* Esther viii. 16. *And the Jews had light and gladness, and joy and honor.*

None of these senses is to be excluded in the passage before us. Believers may walk in darkness

when ignorant or uncertain as to what nearly concerns them, as well as under distress and trouble. They have also a mutual influence upon, produce, and are produced by one another. For illustrating this a little more particularly, observe, that a good man may walk in darkness. 1. When he is in doubt or uncertainty as to his interest in the divine favor. 2. When he is under the pressure of outward calamity. 3. When the state of the church is such, that he cannot understand or explain, in a satisfying manner, the course of divine providence. These particulars I have it not in view to enlarge much upon, but only to explain them so far as is necessary to lay a foundation for what shall be afterwards offered on the duty to trust in God.

1. Then, a good man may walk in darkness when he is in doubt or uncertainty as to his interest in the divine favor. I apprehend that some measure of hope in God's mercy is essential to true piety, and not only the right, but the possession of every child of God. Faith and despair are beyond all question inconsistent. Faith and hope are inseparable. Yet certainly the excellent ones of the earth may be sometimes involved in great perplexity and doubt. This is plain from scripture examples, from daily experience, and from the nature and reason of the thing. How violent a struggle do we often find the Psalmist David in, between hope and fear? *O my God, my soul is cast down in me; therefore will I remember thee from the*

land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar. How many do we see every day under a spirit of bondage, who, though they still cleave to God as their portion, yet are often full of fears, and seldom dare confidently affirm their interest in, or relation to him. And indeed how can it be otherwise? While we are here, our sanctification is but imperfect; and alas! with regard to many, it is often hard to determine, whether we should not write upon it, *mene tekel*, as essentially defective.

Sin separates between God and his people, and causes him to hide his face from them. Nay, sometimes, though there be no particular, or provoking crime as the cause of his controversy with them, he may withdraw from them the light of his countenance to exercise their vigilance, or to try their patience. I know, my brethren, that the distress of serious souls, when mourning after an absent or an angry God, crying to him in secret, and following hard after him in his ordinances, is by many treated with the highest degree of contempt. But surely, if peace of mind from a well-founded hope of the divine favor, is the greatest of all present blessings: And if this, from the variable-ness of our own conduct, is sometimes more, sometimes less strong, and sometimes wholly suspended; when this last is the case, it must occasion inexpressible concern, and there can be no greater evidence of irreligion and impiety than to call it in question.

2. A good man may walk in darkness when under the pressure of outward calamity. This, in a real believer, is never wholly separated from the former. Even in itself, indeed, no affliction for the present is joyous but grievous. The disorders of this feeble frame, poverty and straitness of provision, unjust slander and reproach, must be deeply and sensibly felt by every good man, even as he is a man. To this may be added, the loss of relations, and concerns for the sufferings of others of every kind, which is always most distressing to the best and tenderest spirits. But outward calamities by those that fear God, are felt most sensibly when they are considered as the rod of his anger, and bring sin to remembrance. When he visits his own children with any of his sore judgments: When he follows them with breach upon breach, they are ready to say, *Surely he is setting me up as a mark for his arrows, he is counting me his enemy.*— They are often at a loss to understand the cause of his controversy with them; and they also find it often extremely difficult to bring their minds to a patient and submissive resignation to his holy will. To those who know their duty, and desire through divine grace to comply with it, it is no small difficulty to be obliged to struggle with a rising and rebellious heart within, as well as suffering from without, and to be alternately calling in question, the certainty either of the love of God to them, or of their love to him.

3. A good man may sometimes walk in darkness from the aspect of Providence, and the state of the Redeemer's kingdom. The works of God are sought out of them who have pleasure in them. But when they are not able to penetrate the depths of the divine counsels, this becomes often a source both of distress and temptation. When wicked men are suffered to prosper at their will—when the good are oppressed by the power and tyranny, or persecuted by the malice of their enemies—when the most generous attempts for the revival of truth and righteousness are rendered abortive—when the professing servants of God are divided into parties, or marshalled under names, and their zeal made to spend itself in unnecessary, sinful and hurtful contentions—when offences come, and those of the highest profession or attainments are suffered to fall into gross crimes, by which the mouths of enemies are opened to blaspheme; then may, and must we adopt the words of the Psalmist—Ps. lxxiii. 10—14. *Therefore, his people return hither; and waters of a full cup are wrung out unto them: And they say, how doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.*

I proceed now to the *second* and chief thing proposed from this passage, which was to explain the

duty of trust in God, and to point out its foundation.

Trust, in the most general view we can take of it, may be thus explained. It is a reliance or confidence in God, that however discouraging appearances may be for the present time, yet, by his power and wisdom, our desires and expectation shall take place, whether as to deliverance from trouble, or the obtaining of future blessings. When we can attain this happy frame of spirit, it is an inconceivable relief and ease to the mind under suffering, and is excellently expressed by the Psalmist—*Pf. lv. 22. Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee, he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.* Let us then endeavor to explain the grounds of this as distinctly as possible. And God grant that it may be done not only in a clear, but in a solid and satisfying manner, so as to assist you in the practice of real and vital religion.

I have already said, that our expectation is from the power and wisdom of God. May we, then, reasonably expect, is it our duty to believe, that we shall receive all that we desire, and that is within the reach of divine power and wisdom? These have no bounds at all. We know that nothing is too hard for the Almighty. He doth according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. This suggests to us that there is something more necessary, in order to lay a proper foundation for trust, viz. his goodness to

make our expectation probable, and his promise to make it certain. Even created beings can often do what they will not. This holds particularly with regard to God, whose power is directed in its exercise by his goodness, and limited by his wisdom. His goodness, in general, encourages us to go to him with a peradventure, or who can tell whether he may not be gracious? But in order to make our trust both distinct and strong, we must go to his promise *for he is faithful and keepeth covenant and truth for ever.* Trust then, my brethren, rests ultimately on the promise. It must be precisely commensurate, or of the same extent with the promises. Whoever doubts or calls in question the certainty of what God hath promised, is chargeable with distrust; and whoever expects to receive, in kind or degree, more than he has promised, is so far guilty of presumption. This is the general rule, and I think it carries such evidence with it, that every one must be sensible it is just, who hath heard it with any measure of attention.

But the great difficulty yet remains, which is, to apply this rule to the various cares that occur in the spiritual life, and to tell any particular person what it is his duty firmly to believe, and hope he shall receive from God, and what it would be presumptuous and simple in him to fix his expectation on. This is plainly of the greater importance, that the more particular our trust is, as to the object of desire, it is the more powerful a support to the mind. At the same time it frequently hap-

pens, that the more particularly our desires are formed, the foundation of our hope appears the more uncertain and questionable. On this account you may observe, that it is of the greatest moment to understand the nature and tenor of the promises; or rather, indeed, to explain the foundation of trust, and to explain the nature and tenor of the promises is one and the same thing.

For this end, it may be proper to distinguish the promises of God, as to futurity, into two heads, *absolute* and *conditional*. By absolute promises, in this place, I understand only those that are so in the most unlimited sense, that is to say, revealed as a part of the fixed plan of Providence, suspended on no terms but what all, of every character, may expect will certainly come to pass. Such are the promises after the flood, *that summer and winter, seed time and harvest should not fail*—the coming of Christ in the flesh at the fulness of time, to the ancient Patriarchs, and to us—*the downfall of Antichrist*—the preservation of a church on earth, let its enemies be or do what they will—*the calling of God's antient people, the Jews, and the coming of Christ to judge the world at the last day*. These are all called promises in scripture, and so far as they can be of any use to the people of God, either for direction in duty, or restraint from sin, or consolation under trial, they are to be depended on, in the most absolute manner, for they rest upon the certainty of the holy scriptures, and the truth of the unchangeable God, who is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent.

S E R M O N LII.

T R U S T I N G O D.

B Y

JOHN WITHERSPOON, D. D. L. L. D.

Col. N. C. P.

ISAIAH I. 10.

Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.

HAVING, in a former discourse, opened the character and state of those who are called upon, and exhorted to trust in the name of the Lord, and entered upon the *second thing* proposed; which was to explain the duty of trust in God, and to point out its foundation; and having in this view considered the nature of absolute promises—I proceed,

2. To consider the nature and use of *conditional* promises. These I am obliged, for greater distinctness, to divide into three different heads.—1. There are promises made to persons of such or

such a character, or in such or such a state.—2. There are promises, the performance of which is suspended on our compliance with something previously required, as the condition of obtaining them.—3. There are promises, not only suspended on both the preceding terms, but upon the supposition of some circumstances in themselves uncertain, or to us unknown. Let us consider each of these with care and attention.

1. There are promises made to persons of such or such a character, or in such or such a state, which are, therefore, to be applied, and rested on, according as the evidence of our being of this character, or in this state, is clear or obscure. In this I have particularly in view, the blessings of salvation, the pardon of sin, peace with God, the spirit of sanctification, and a right to everlasting life. These all lie in an unbroken chain, and inseparable connexion, and might have been more briefly expressed, by an interest in Christ the Saviour, who is the author, source and sum of these blessings; *for all the promises of God in him, are yea, and in him amen, to the glory of God by us.* Let no judicious attentive hearer be surprised or dissatisfied, that I have ranked these among conditional promises, for you may observe that I have expressed myself thus, they are promises made to persons of such or such a character, or in such or such a state. In this, they certainly differ from the promises properly *absolute*, mentioned above. It is

far from my intention to do injury to that fundamental truth, that salvation is by grace. I esteem that doctrine which proceeds upon a self-righteous system, to be contrary to the word of God, and most pernicious to the souls of men. There is nothing at all required in scripture to be performed by us, as a purchasing or meriting condition. Every gracious act of the divine government, in our favor, is the fruit of the Redeemer's purchase, and every holy disposition wrought in us, is the effect of his Almighty Grace. But it is certain at the same time, that in order to our accepting those blessings, we must be truly and deeply humbled, and see ourselves to be incapable and helpless. We must be unfeignedly willing to renounce all claim of merit, and accept of salvation as it is offered in the gospel; that is, in its full extent, and in the free and sovereign manner of its communication. So far, surely, we must say, the promises of the gospel are conditional, or wholly pervert the word of God. I know of no promises then to the unbelieving and impenitent, unless you call that a promise, that they shall have *their portion in the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone; and that the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.*

Hear it, my dear brethren, it is the *needy, thirsty, sensible* soul that is invited to come and find rest. *Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come*

buy wine and milk without money and without price. Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. If any shall think fit further to say, that the very destination of the vessels of mercy, is of God's sovereign pleasure, that conviction itself is by a day of his power, and that faith which interests us in Christ's righteousness is his gift: I agree to the whole, but observe, that it is improperly introduced here. No use can possibly be made of the divine decree in the application of the promises. It is inverting the order of things. Can any man say, I trust in the mercy of God, because I have been ordained to everlasting life? No man can derive comfort from this, till by his effectual calling it is published, and begins to be accomplished; and then he may look back with wonder and gratitude to that everlasting love, by which he was chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Can you judge of the fruit of a tree by looking upon the root? No, but you judge of the strength and deepness of the root, by the fulness of the fruit, and the vigor and verdure of the branches. From an improper mixture of what belongs to the secret will of God, and what belongs to us, as our duty, much error and confusion arises,

Now, my brethren, as to the application of these promises of pardon and peace, the humbled sinner, the man among us, who walketh in darkness and hath no light—who is burdened with a sense

of guilt, and discouraged by the threatenings of the law, the accusations of conscience, and the pure and holy nature of God; who, perhaps, has all this aggravated by distress and trouble, is called to trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God. He is invited to consider and rest on the extent of the call, the immutability of the promise, and the riches of divine grace. If he is so far from pleading any merit in himself, or being dissatisfied with the plan of salvation laid down in the gospel, that he is making every thing an argument against himself, and dare not lay hold of, or appropriate so unspeakable a mercy: This is just the effect of distrust, and he is called, in the strongest manner, in the text, to *trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God*. With how many gracious assurances for this purpose is the scripture filled. John vi. 37. *All that the Father hath given me shall come to me, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.* Heb. vii. 25. *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.* Rev. xxii. 17. *And the spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.* All things, Christ excepted, are to be renounced to the all-sufficiency of a Redeemer, to be the foundation of our hope. The penitent will say with the apostle. Phil. iii. 8. *Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus*

my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, even the righteousness which is of God by faith.

2. There is a second class of promises, the performance of which is suspended on our previous compliance with something required as the condition of obtaining them. In these we are not only called *to accept of the divine mercy, but commanded to obey the divine will.* The order in which I have placed these, will, I hope, prevent you from misunderstanding or misapplying what may be said on them. This class includes all the promises in scripture regarding the daily progress of a believer in his sanctification and conformity to God, as well as the increase of his comfort and peace. I am sensible, that as the reconciliation of a sinner to God, and his right to what is called in scripture *the promise* of eternal life, is of free and unmerited mercy, so, no doubt, all the inferior or subordinate promises flow from the same source, nay, in a certain measure, they are entirely upon the same footing with those formerly mentioned; that is to say, final perseverance, real growth in the spiritual life, and necessary comfort, are the sure and purchased portion of every one that is born of God. Rom. viii. 29. *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many*

brethren. But in the distribution of those gifts, particularly in their measure, there is not only an unknown regard to the good pleasure of God, but a known and established regard to our conduct in duty. Thus the abundant supply of the spirit is the fruit and return of diligence in prayer. Matt. vii. 7. *Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.* See also Ezekiel xxxvi. 25. compared with the 37th. *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness; and from all your idols will I cleanse you, &c.* Thus saith the Lord, yet for all this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them. Thus also inward consolation as well as outward security, is expressly promised as the effect and reward of uniformity and diligence in duty. Isa. xxxii. 17. *And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.* As the counterpart and illustration of this, you see, that a departure from the path of duty brings on the threatened, or, perhaps, I ought to call it, the promised rod of correction. Ps. lxxxix. 30—33. *But if his children shall forsake my law, and not walk in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.* In the same manner, Isa. xl. 30, 31. *Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon*

the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary—they shall walk and not faint. Agreeably to all this, you know, our blessed Lord prescribed watchfulness and prayer as the great preservatives against temptation, and whoever expects either spiritual strength, or comfort, while he relaxes his diligence in the way of duty, is guilty of that sin, which is called in scripture, tempting God; and shall assuredly meet with a dreadful disappointment.

My brethren, as much of the daily exercise of real believers regards their progress in sanctification and their peace and comfort, it is proper that you should carefully attend to the tenor of these promises, and to what ought to be your reliance upon them. I shall sum up, in a few particulars, what I apprehend to be of most importance.

1. Trust in these promises implies self-denial, and a deep sense of your own weakness. These promises would be unnecessary and superfluous were we not insufficient of ourselves for any thing that is good. Trust in God stands directly opposed to all self-dependance. Prov. iii. 5. *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding.* How jealous God is, if I may speak so, of the honor that is due to him in this respect, may be seen from the many foul and shameful crimes into which he permitted some of his best saints to fall, when they were off their guard, by

sloth, or still more provoked him by pride and presumption. Noah's drunkenness, Moses's passion, David's adultery and murder, and Peter's denial of his master. 1 Cor. x. 11. 12. *Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.* For this reason the apostle Paul says with great propriety, and with great force, which is equally applicable to himself and other believers, a seeming paradox. 1 Cor. xii. 10. *For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

2. As we are to put no trust in ourselves, so we are to exercise the most unshaken confidence of our being able to discharge any duty or undergo any trial by the help of the Almighty.—Oh! how ready are we to sin on both hands? How often do we presume upon our own strength and forget the necessity of applying for divine aid?—And on the other hand, how prone are we to timidity or despondence in difficult cases? When corruptions have long kept their ground, we are ready to dread their influence, and to make but little out of the promises in scripture, that we shall be made *more than conquerors through him that loved us.* We have learned, by sad experience, that in us dwelleth no good thing, and yet it is long before we will attend to the lesson that follows hard upon it, *My grace is sufficient for thee, and my strength shall be made perfect in weakness.*

3. As these promises are exprelsly made to the diligent, you must still remember that your own attention and application to duty is essentially necessary, and that the assistance promised from on high, is always represented in scripture as an argument and encouragement to diligence, and not a warrant or excuse for sloth. Phillip. ii. 12. *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* It is also well worthy of notice, that the same prophet Ezekiel, who says, chap. xxxvi. 26. *A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you,* changes the form of his expression; and in another place, chap. xviii. 31, 32. speaks in the following terms; *Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.* In consequence of this,

4. In the last place, trust in God will make us ready to acknowledge, that when we fail in duty, when we forget or break our resolutions, the fault is certainly in ourselves. It is impossible to excuse or justify ourselves in any degree, without laying the blame, in the same proportion, upon God, and calling in question his faithfulness and truth. But whatever our treacherous hearts may sinfully suggest, we are not straitened in God, but straitened in our own bowels. We find him

pleading his own cause, in this respect, in many passages of scripture. Isa. lix. 1. *Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that he cannot hear; but your sins have separated between you and your God, and your iniquities have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.* Upon the whole, trust in these promises is no other than an humble and diligent application to duty, under a deep sense of weakness, and dependance on promised strength, accompanied with a firm persuasion, that *in the name of the Lord we shall tread down our enemies, and go on from strength to strength, till we appear before God in Zion.*

3. Another class of promises are those that are suspended, not only on the same conditions with the two former, but upon some other circumstances in themselves uncertain, or to us unseen. These are temporal mercies, or rather temporal prosperity, deliverance from present distress, and abundance or affluence of outward enjoyments. Perhaps we may also add spiritual consolation, and sensible joy in God. I find no temporal promise precisely fixed to the servant of God but this: *Bread shall be given him, and his water shall be sure;* and it is certainly his duty, in the most straitening circumstances, to maintain a confident dependance on the power and wisdom of Providence for necessary supply. I do not condemn those who, when reduced to extremity, have actually pleaded this divine promise, and against hope,

have believed in hope; and I am persuaded instances have not been wanting of relief, furnished in a manner next to miraculous. But as to every other degree of temporal prosperity, God hath reserved it in his own hand to give or withhold it at his pleasure, that is, as he sees it will be most for his glory, and the benefit of his people. It is lawful then, my brethren, for you to endeavor to procure, by honest industry, the increase of your substance, to look well to the state of your flocks and your herds, and to ask by prayer the blessing of God upon your labors. It is lawful, and it is your duty by regularity and care, to preserve life and health, as well as to ask of the Father of your Spirits, recovery from sickness, or deliverance from any other kind of distress. But you are not warranted to believe that these petitions shall be granted in hand, or in your own time and measure, even though you ask them in sincerity with the prayer of faith. There may be reasons for withholding them, and yet you may be accepted in your prayers. An infinitely wise God knows best what is for your good, and he only hath a right to determine in what part of his own service; where and how long he shall employ you. Trust in God, therefore, in this respect, implies a careful attention to the tenor of the promises with regard to temporal mercies, and not to look for, or even, if possible, desire what he hath not promised to bestow.

If I am not mistaken, we shall find it of moment, upon this subject, to observe, both what he hath not

and what he hath certainly promised. He has nowhere promised that his own people shall be the richest or the greatest on earth; but he hath certainly promised to bless their provision, and assured them that a little that a just man hath, shall be better than the riches of many wicked. He has not promised that they shall be free from suffering; but he hath certainly promised to support them by his own presence under their distress. Isa. xliii. 2. *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.* The truth is, he hath promised that *all things shall work together for their good.* In one word, they have indeed all mercies promised, only they themselves are not in a condition, at present, to judge what they may use with safety, and what not. As the heir of an opulent estate, though he is proprietor of all, yet is laid under restraint while in infancy and nonage, because he would soon ruin himself if it were committed to his own management; so the believer, though an heir of God, and joint heir with Christ, yet till he is meet for the inheritance, he must be at his Maker's and Redeemer's disposal. Take in, therefore, only this limitation, and then see his extensive charter. 1 Cor. iii. 21.—*For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.* What then is

the duty of a child of God? It is to breathe after more and more submission to the divine will, and to annex this reservation to every petition of a temporal nature, nevertheless, not my will but thine be done. And oh! my brethren, how happy the person who hath seen the weakness of human judgment; who waits the intimation of God's will, before he will suffer his desires to fasten with eagerness on any earthly comfort, and who endeavors to keep himself free from perplexity, by an humble and submissive reliance on the all-sufficiency of God!

I observed in entering on this part of the subject, that spiritual consolation, or sensible joy in God, is to be considered as a promise of the same class, which must, therefore, be asked with submission, and is dispensed according to the good pleasure of a gracious but sovereign God. I am sensible, as has been formerly observed, with another view, that some degree of comfort necessarily follows from a believer's relation to God, but many pious persons seem to desire and to expect sensible comfort in a higher measure than God sees it meet to give them, or, than is proper for them in the present state. It is with spiritual prosperity as with temporal, every one cannot bear it. Therefore, it is our duty still to be sensible that we have much more comfort and peace than we deserve, and as we desire and strive for greater degrees of it, to accompany these desires with much humility and resignation to the will of God.

I proceed now to the last thing proposed, which was to make a practical application of this subject for your instruction and direction.

1. From what has been said, you may see what judgment you ought to form of inward suggestions, and strong or particular impressions upon your minds. There are some extremely prone to interpret a text of scripture, suddenly suggested to their minds, or any strong impression made on them, as an immediate message from God, to be directly applied to themselves: Others, in opposition to this, as enthusiastical and visionary, seem to give up every expectation of being able to say with the Psalmist, *I bless the Lord who hath given me counsel, my reins also instruct me in the night season.* I beg, therefore, that you may observe, that the suggestion of a passage of scripture, of itself gives no title to the immediate application of it, because the great deceiver may undoubtedly suggest scripture, as we find he could reason from it in our Saviour's temptation. We are, in every such case, to consider the tenor of it, if it be a promise or encouragement, that is, how and in what manner it may be safely applied. If any thing happens to be suggested that expressly suits our present condition, either by setting home the obligation of duty, with particular evidence upon the conscience, or pointing out the grounds of comfort, it ought to be thankfully acknowledged as from the spirit of God. For example, if a person, un-

der the power of a spirit of bondage, and fear of divine wrath, hath suggested to him any of the extensive gracious assurances of mercy to the chief of sinners, it is his duty to lay hold of it. It is directly suited to his condition, and would be the very thing that a wise and judicious pastor would recommend to him for his relief. He may therefore, without hesitation, bless God for it, if it is brought with power and efficacy upon his heart. In the same manner, if a person under trouble hath suggested to him any of the promises of support under it, surely he ought, in the discharge of his duty, firmly to rely on the accomplishment of that part of the word of God. But in the reflex examination of a person's character or state, to apply the sudden suggestion of a promise or privilege, perhaps of a conditional nature, is certainly both sinful and dangerous. Sinful, because without warrant; and dangerous, because leading to delusion.

2. From what hath been said, you may see what it is that we ought to seek for, with the greatest earnestness, and may hope to obtain, with the greatest confidence. Recollect, I beseech you, the order in which I have mentioned the promises of God as the objects of trust and reliance. First of all the promises of salvation, deliverance from the guilt of sin, and a right to everlasting life; next whatever is necessary to the preservation and improvement of the spiritual life; and then in the

third place, proper accommodation, and suitable provision in our passage through the present world. They are here ranked according to their value in themselves, and the value which we should put upon them. Let us, therefore, take care that we never violate this order, which is necessary, not only because of their comparative value, but because of their mutual influence one upon another. It is in vain for us to expect to attain to the habit or practice of holiness, till we are united to God by faith in Jesus Christ. All the promises of the gospel are ratified in him. All the divine fulness is treasured up in him. Every divine gift is dispensed by him. Therefore, he says, John xv. 4. *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.* And the apostle Paul, Gal. ii. 20. *I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

In the same manner nothing can be more preposterous, than to fix our affections upon temporal mercies, or our attention upon the promises that relate to them, so as to lose view of our interest in God's favor, and the progress of our sanctification. All the temporal promises in scripture are made to the children of God as such, and for carrying on the purposes of his grace in them.—Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need

of these things. There is no promise in the whole volume of inspiration to the wicked and impenitent. *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.* He will either rebuke them in his wrath and chasten them in his hot displeasure, or give them up to a cursed, hardening, stupifying prosperity, than which, no state on earth is more to be dreaded.—Christian! never suffer an anxiety about your outward state to supplant or go before, or even to be separated from a concern, that you may not be found wanting when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary.

3. Let me beseech you to adore the wisdom, justice and mercy of God, in the order he hath established, according to the different nature of the promises. That which is of most, nay, properly speaking, of unspeakable value, and radically contains all the rest, is placed first in order, and offered in the most free and gracious manner, without money and without price. Salvation is preached to the chief of sinners, and a Saviour held forth as able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him. Many uses might be made of this, but the single use I intend to make of it, at present, as connected with the duty of trust, is to silence the complaints of envy and impatience. How prone are many to look with an evil eye upon the more extensive possessions, and greater apparent outward comfort which others enjoy? Does it not astonish you to think how much unbelief and ingratitude

there is in those repining thoughts? Meanness of rank, and poverty of state, are no hinderance at all to an interest in Christ, and a right to everlasting life. Nay, the gospel is preached to the poor.—Many a Lazarus has been carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom, while the rich and luxurious have lifted up their eyes in torments. Will you, can you, dare you then complain? Will you envy the man of the world, his stately palace—his elegant furniture, and his sumptuous fare? What is the amplest portion in the present life compared with the sure mercies of David? What child of God would exchange with any wicked man a prison for a palace, or a scaffold for a throne?

I beseech you to add to all this, that, even with regard to present peace or comfort, there is no comparison between a good man and a bad. *A man's life doth not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses.* This is a truth not only often repeated in the sacred oracles, but written in the clearest and most legible characters in the history of Providence.—Nay, even independently of virtue or religion itself, every human calamity, whether arising from sickness, reproach, contention, fear, or ungratified desire, rages with greater violence in the higher, than in the lower stations of life. A vain and conceited monarch once sent to ask at an heathen oracle, who was the happiest man on earth? and met with a deserved disappointment in the reply. If we should put a question much more profitable as well

as much more easily resolved, in what rank of life the most exquisite human misery has been found? I have no doubt but it ought to be *answered* upon a throne. Experience will always ratify the wise man's observation: *Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.* A sanctified lot is an inestimable treasure. The blessing of God on a cruise of oil, and a pot of meal, is better than inexhaustible mines of gold and silver. What cause of contentment and patience to the child of God!

In the last place, you may learn, from what has been said on the subject, what is the plainest, the shortest, and, indeed, the only sure way to deliverance from distress or calamity of whatever kind. It is to fly to the mercy of God through the blood of Christ, to renew the exercises of faith, in him, and, in proportion as it pleases God, to fill you with all joy, and peace in believing; you will perceive every other covenant-blessing flow clear and unmixed from this inexhausted source. It will lead to repentance, humiliation and submission. The sanctified use of the affliction will be obtained, and this brings deliverance of itself; for no rod will be continued longer, than it hath answered its end. At any rate, when suffering is necessary, grace, to suffer with patience, shall not be withheld. Would you have any more, and is not this remedy always at hand? Can the poorest man say it is not within the reach of his purse? It is, at once, effectual and

universal. It was once said in contempt of a worthy and pious minister, that he made so much of the blood of Christ, that he would apply it even to a broken bone. But bating what may be thought indecent in the expression, chosen on purpose to bring a good man into ridicule, the thing itself, I make bold to affirm, is a great and a precious truth. Faith in the blood of Christ makes a man superior to all sufferings. It softens their aspect—it abates their severity—nay, it changes their nature. When a man is under distress or calamity of any kind, and considers it only in itself, and independently of his relation to God, it retains its old nature, and tastes with all the bitterness of the original curse; but when it is considered as limited in its nature—its measure, and its continuance by a kind Saviour, the believer submits to it with patience, as a part of his Creator's will; bears it with patience in his Redeemer's strength, and sometimes is enabled to embrace it with pleasure, as serving to carry him to his Father's presence. Is this going too far? No, my dear brethren; there are great realities to which the word of God, and the experience of his saints, bear united evidence. Many here present, I doubt not, have been witnesses of this truth, in the carriage of their relations now with God; and not a few, I trust, will repeat the testimony to succeeding ages. I conclude all with that animated passage of the apostle Paul.—2 Cor. iv. 16, 17. *For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is*

renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.



S E R M O N LIII.

ON THE LOVE OF MONEY.

B Y

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I TIMOTHY VI. 10.

For the love of money is the root of all evil; which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

WE are here informed, that a supreme attachment to the riches of this world, is an insurmountable obstacle in the great work of gospel-salvation. Covetousness is idolatry, and idolatry excludes from the kingdom of heaven—To free us, therefore, from the bondage, and guard against the baneful effects of this sin, many precepts and exhortations are given in the word of God. Thus we are commanded, *Love not the world, neither the things which are in the world*, with the most unequivocal and explicit declaration, *if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in*

him.—We are assured that the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choak the word, and render it unfruitful.—We are taught that, in order to our becoming the true disciples of Christ, and possessing the benefits of his purchase, it is necessary that we should forsake *houses and lands, father and mother, brethren and sisters, husband and wife*, in point of supreme affection—and it is strictly enjoined upon us, to *seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*; and to lay up our treasure in heaven, that our hearts may be there also. As an argument of restraint from having our affections too much set on the perishable objects of time, we are reminded that, *as we brought nothing into this world, so we can carry nothing out.*—Upon this ground, we are exhorted to be contented with moderate enjoyments; and the danger of erring from this rule, to the extreme of a too eager desire of worldly goods, is pointed out in the text.—*But they that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition—For the love of money is the root of all evil: which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

As a discourse, founded on this passage, must strike at one of the great idols of the world, and at the partial idolatry even of those who are of the household of faith, it may offend; but it is not designed to offend, any farther than is absolutely

necessary to promote human happiness—and so far may God grant that his word may offend; that it may prove *quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and that it may be a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

It is a long time since the prophet uttered that complaint with the tears of overflowing compassion; *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* The same complaint, we who at present minister in holy things, have often occasion to make. For though the messages of Jehovah shall not be lost, yet to many, it is to be feared, they have been, and still are, as the sounding brass and tinkling symbol; and to some of you, perhaps, they will be ultimately swift witnesses to aggravate your condemnation; for *that servant who knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.*

Among other causes which prevent the success of the gospel, and the establishment and effects of gospel-institutions, and which expose to many and great evils, we may place that of the LOVE OF MONEY—An undue attachment to the creatures of time, which the apostle styles covetousness, and erring from the faith of our Christian profession—This is the root of all evil.

To consider all the evils to which the sin mentioned in the text exposeth us, would draw out this discourse to an undue length; I shall, therefore, only mention a few of them, and then conclude the subject with a practical improvement.

I. The love of money is the root of all evil to the body—It urges men on to immoderate labors, and unseasonable toils and watchings—These exercises, in their excess, become at length an established habit of life; for the covetous are not satisfied with any addition of wealth; but the more they have the more they want—They join house to house, and field to field, and, after many additions, they have not enough—*In the midst of their sufficiency they are in straits.*—And that they may get more, they are abundant in labors, and watchings, and distracting cares.—*There is no end of their labor, and they bereave their souls of good.* Hence often infirmities, weakneses, and various diseases, sometimes succeed each other—Hence frequently the wrinkles and furrows of age are deeply impressed before the usual meridian of life—Hence aches and pains are ingrafted on the constitution at an early period, and increase with those increasing cares, and over-much labor, which at the first produced them. The body stoops under the burden which is unnecessarily assumed, and sooner becomes a prey to death; or, if it should be able to sustain the weight, which an excessive desire after worldly goods has created, yet in some un-

foreseen moment, it may fall a victim to the rage of lust and passion. The evil eye may excite the assassin to give the mortal stab, that he may possess the treasure—Besides, some *who will be rich*, by unjust means, fall into the snare of bonds and imprisonment, and having become extreme offenders, the chains of their guilt drag them at length to the gallows, as their awful and disgraceful end.

The caution of wise king Solomon was written that it might be read, and considered, and observed. *My son, saith he, if sinners entice thee consent thou not. If they say, come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: Let us swallow them up alive as the grave, and whole as those who go down into the pit: We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoils: Cast thy lot among us; let us all have one purse: My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood. And they lay wait for their own blood, they lurk privily for their own lives. Mark what follows: So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; which taketh away the life of the owners thereof.*

The ways of those, who are less offenders by the love of money, resemble, in kind, if not in degree, the destructive courses of their more guilty brethren. The principle which guides their actions is the same; and if it is not subdued, it must produce the ruin of the one as well as of the other.—

the degree of punishment will, indeed, be in exact proportion to the degree of guilt; but it is surely small consolation to reflect, that the punishment, we endure is not the greatest which God could inflict upon us. At the prospect of slaughtered legions, and fields stained with human blood, your horror—your compassion—your astonishment are awakened; you tremble—you sigh—you weep; you ask what was the cause of such dreadful—such distressing effects. Hear the apostle James. *From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not—ye kill and desire to have, and cannot obtain—ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not—ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.* Thus is the love of money the root of many evils to the body.

II. It is essentially injurious to the soul. It has a tendency to impoverish and enfeeble the mind, and to debase all its noble powers and faculties, which were formed for sublime employment; to give glory to God, and hold communion with the saints in light. Being of the earth, there is a natural propensity in man to become earthly, and if we indulge to this propensity, the images of earthly objects must be strongly impressed upon the mind, and by a long and familiar converse with them, the soul becomes so united to them as never to leave them. They employ its sleeping as well

as its waking thoughts; and these objects being of an inferior nature, they keep the mind low and poor, excluding from its view those objects of improving excellency, after which it was formed to aspire. This observation you may see verified in the various ranks of men, which compose society. In each you may see men ignorant of almost every thing, except the art of getting and keeping money; and their undue attention to this art, and great improvement in it, is the cause of their ignorance.

But the love of money is especially injurious to the soul, as it vitiates all its moral powers. It induces men to *call evil good, and good evil; to put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; to make gold their hope, and to say to the fine gold, thou art my confidence, and to deny the God that is above.* It raises a wall of separation between God and the sinner, which it is difficult, and next to impossible to overpass or demolish. *How hard is it for them who trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God? Jesus said, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.* The difficulty to a covetous man of obtaining the special favor of God, and preparation for heavenly happiness, increases in proportion to the strength of his desire after the goods of time, as his treasure. His worldly carnal desire and covetous thoughts, by long continuance, become so confirmed, that there is, in

the end, but little probability that they will ever be changed. In this case we can only say, *with God all things are possible*. At the same time, the sinner has reason to dread that awful sentence, *Let him alone, he is joined to idols*.

With what a solemn and grateful attention, then, should we listen to that most benevolent and gracious precept; *Love not the world, neither the things which are in the world; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him?* Why did Demas forsake Christ? Why did Demetrius and his craftsmen raise a tumult against Paul for preaching against idolatry? Why did Ananias and Saphira lie to the Holy Ghost? Why did the Pharisees deride Christ for speaking against covetousness? And why did the young man, whose moral conduct was amiable, refuse, when commanded, to sell all his worldly substance and distribute it to the poor, and follow the Saviour, who had promised him an incorruptible treasure in heaven?—The same answer equally applies to all. It was because the love of the Father was not in them—the love of money was rooted in their hearts. They loved this present world—they were covetous. Dreadful delusion, indeed! to hug the chains which must perpetuate our bondage—to prefer the gains of this world to the gains of godliness, at the awful hazard of an everlasting separation from the congregation of the saints in light—from the assembly of angels, and the presence of God! Such treasures

as these, when they possess the whole heart, are poverty and ruin of the most dreadful kind; for *what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?* In the loss of the soul there is a total shipwreck. Not so much as a plank is left to bring the deluded adventurer to a peaceful and hospitable shore. The billows of God's wrath overwhelm him, and he is *drowned in destruction and perdition*. See then, and remember, that *the love of money is the root of all evil to the soul*.

III. It is also very injurious to man as a member of civil and religious society. It induceth him to act only from selfish principles, and with a view to his own advantage, without regard to the prosperity of others. It restrains, and has a tendency to destroy a spirit of liberality, and every noble and generous pursuit. It blinds the eyes so that its devotees do not often see human misery, and those pinching wants, which, with the most plaintive voice, solicit for charity; or, it hardens the heart, and prevents the exercise of a beneficent sympathy and generous compassion. It prevents an attention to the public good, and those objects of improvement in which society is interested, and which need the aid of all its members. I may say, therefore, that the love of money is the root of all the evils of injustice. In some it proves a temptation to theft and robbery—in others, it begets extortion and oppression—it compels them, by its poisonous influence, to keep false balances, and

diverse weights and measures—a great and a small. In all these, and in many other respects, it is injurious to man as a member of society; because it unfits him to act up to the relation which he sustains—it robs him of a good character, and exposes him to censure, and such punishments, as men, in a civilized state, have power, and are bound to inflict.

Society has a claim upon every member, for the improvement of all his gifts, talents and possessions, with an express reference to the good of the whole body; for no man should live to himself; and these cannot be withheld without manifest injustice; but injustice to the body, is injustice to each member of it; so that for a man to be unjust to society, is to be unjust to himself. He cannot, by that parsimony which the love of money begets, injure the body, without suffering with it, because he is a member of it. And if he is a member of Christ's visible Church, his suffering in this case is to be estimated by the value of those blessings, temporal and spiritual, which he might have obtained by a contrary spirit, as well as by the weight of that wrath to which his guilt subjects him. To them who honor the Lord with their substance, it is promised, that their *barns shall be filled with plenty*—And they who are *rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate*, are assured that they are, in this way, *laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may*

lay hold on eternal life. You will not mistake my meaning, when I say, that the Christian, by a parsimonious spirit, suffers much in the present life; I do not mean that he is always sensible of his loss, or distressed about it. Doubtless there are many Christians, from whom many blessings are withheld, only for their partial indulgence to the sin which we have been considering, who are, for the most part, composed, insensible to their losses, and, therefore, but seldom pained with self-accusations for their folly. Their fields, under the same tillage as formerly, produce but lean crops: They *have sown much, and bring in little—they eat, but have not enough—they drink, but are not filled with drink—they clothe themselves, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.* Such events as these may happen to a people, as well now as two thousand years ago, where there is similitude of principle and practice. And they may happen without their once considering the true cause from whence they proceed—the refusal to honor God with their substance. It is not the design of this discourse to provoke, unless it be to such good works as shall make you honorable in your profession of Christianity upon earth, and, at the same time, be a favorable sign that you are of the household of faith, and partakers of the image of the Saviour, who was most illustrious for a disinterested and steady attention to objects of public and general utility. —I have said, that the professing Christian, by an

indulgence to the sin in the text, may suffer much in this present life; but what should especially awaken our fears is, that punishment which awaits the impenitent in an after state. *No covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God; for because of this sin cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.* Therefore we, who are of the day, should not be partakers with them.

And now to conclude this subject—since it appears that the love of money is the root of all evil to body and soul, and is exceedingly injurious to man as a member of civil and religious society; it is to be hoped that you are all ready, my hearers, to pass sentence against it; for I cannot suppose that any of you can, in judgment, approve of that disposition of heart which is pregnant with so many and great evils as have been mentioned—You do not hesitate to condemn the man who maketh haste to be rich by injustice, fraud and oppression—You think it just, that he that removeth his neighbor's land-mark, should bear the curse of heaven; and that he who oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, should come to want—You despise the thief as the meanest character, and the daring plunderer, who, with violent hands seizeth upon his neighbor's goods; and judge that such persons merit perpetual confinement, or capital punishment. But do you condemn those cares which impair the health of the body, disturb the

peace of the mind, choak the word, and hinder the success of the gospel? Do you condemn a refusal to honor God with your substance when he calls for it, for the promotion and establishment of his kingdom, and interest in the world? Do you condemn the want of public spirit, liberality, and charitable dispositions towards the poor and needy; and whatever has a tendency to cramp the human mind in its improvements, and prevent the happiness of the social state, with respect to the present and future world? And does your practice correspond with those sentiments? If so, then you are free from that blame which is due to those who have an undue attachment to the goods of time; you welcome the messages of the gospel, and hear them without contempt of the speaker or his master, even when they are pointed against your idols—You hasten to hear them, at the expence of some weariness to the flesh, and of some time from your worldly businesses and pursuits; and the fruit of your hearing is, that you are *ready to every good word and work*—Consequently you do not err from the duties of your Christian profession, neither have pierced yourselves through with those many sorrows, which are the effects of the sin which we have been considering, and which in their consequences work death. But is this true? and is this a general thing? Here, even charity herself is silent—or if she speaks, she is obliged to put a negative upon the question. She says it is not true of the whole, but only of a few—And we fear of

but very few comparatively—and for the ground of this jealous fear, I beg leave to point you only to the small and partial sacrifices of time and worldly business, which are made on week-days, in the private and public worship of God! How little time is spent in reading the scriptures, and comparing the exercises of our hearts with this infallible rule, by which we are at last to be judged? What a small portion of your time is devoted to prayer? and with what reluctance do some come out to hear the word, when the farm or merchandize must be neglected for that hour; whilst others refuse to hear or serve, unless it be when the service costs them nought. Where then is your friendship to the master whom you profess to serve?—Does your zeal for the things of Christ's kingdom, kindled from the altar of God, consume that spirit of worldliness which marks the character of the man who is the friend of the world, and the enemy of God?—What do you more than others? Publicans trespass upon the rights of the sabbath, by conversation unsuitable to the day—and are you free from this sin? Publicans are zealous to obtain the corruptible inheritance—and are you not imitators of them in this respect? Publicans turn their back upon the church, and disdain to worship the Lord God of Hosts, and to be governed by his precepts; and are not many of you lukewarm Christians, neither hot nor cold; such as God has threatened to spew out of his

mouth? And is not one leading cause of all this a too great love for this present evil world?

Brethren, remember that kind and solemn admonition with which I shall conclude, *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him—* And if the love of the Father is not in him, he certainly has not the spirit of Christ; and if he has not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his; and if he is not his, he shall not inherit his glory.



S E R M O N L I V .

*The COMPONENT PARTS of CHRIST'S CHURCH,
and the ADVANTAGES of UNION.*

B Y

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EPHESIANS iv. 15, 16.

But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love.

THE church of Christ, in various places of the New Testament, is spoken of as one body, of which Christ is the head; and in no place is the union of the church more strongly expressed than in the passage we are now about to consider.

For in the 11th verse, Paul sayeth, that Christ gave some, apostles: and some, prophets: and some,

evangelists: and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

That is, Christ hath given to the church, here called his body, the officers before mentioned, that by means of their ministrations, it might have an increase of light, love, faith and joy in God in all holy obedience, and might not be like children, easily imposed upon and carried away with erroneous doctrines: *But speaking the truth in love, might grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love.*

“ Here is a manifest allusion to the human body, which is composed of different joints and members, knit together by various ligaments, and furnished with nerves, tendons, and vessels of communication to and from every part of the body; which by these means is nourished, actuated and invigorated, and arrives to its full strength and stature.”*

* Dr. Guise in Loc.

The plain sense of the text appears to be this, that we Christians, speaking the truth in love, should seek after an increase in knowledge and grace, and then grow up in union with Christ the head; from whom, or rather by whom the whole body, being orderly and firmly united together, every one in his proper place, by the assistance which every part thus united, gives to the whole, according to the effectual operation of the holy spirit, in the measure in which it is given, to every part or member, maketh or obtaineth increase unto the edifying of itself in love.

This truth we are taught in the passage, and this we shall particularly attend to, to wit, That the church consisteth of a variety of parts, and that a union ought to be sought after between those parts. Here I shall,

I. Briefly consider the parts of which the whole is constituted.

II. Shew how these parts are united so as to constitute one body.

III. Mention some of the most important ends answered by this union: which I trust will illustrate the truth that union ought to be sought after by the parts or members.

I. I am briefly to consider the parts of which the whole church is constituted.

Here it will be natural to observe, *first*, That Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, who was

made flesh, and dwelt among us, is the head of the church.

Secondly, The parts of which the church or body of Christ is instituted are, in a large view, all those sanctified spirits of just men made perfect, who are in glory, together with all the churches of Jesus Christ upon earth.

Agreeably to this, the apostle to the Hebrews, when enumerating their particular advantages as Christians, saying that *they were come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels. To the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.*

So also Paul sayeth, that *God hath made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself; that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him.*

Thus we have taken a comprehensive view of the church or body of Jesus Christ; part of which is in heaven, and part on earth.

We shall now proceed to take a more minute survey of the individual members, or smaller component parts of the churches of Christ upon earth; or shew who they are.

Here I am led to speak of a matter, concerning which, many great and good men have differed.

Some suppose that it is the design of Christ, that none should be admitted into the church but those who are the subjects of regenerating grace, and make a profession of their belief of gospel truths, and give credible evidence of their gracious state, and their children.

Such plead, that the ordinances of the gospel are seals of the covenant between God and gracious souls; and that when unregenerate persons come to their ordinances, they set the seal to a blank.

That all unregenerate men are enemies to God and holiness; and as holiness is required prior to coming to ordinances, they cannot come for want of an essentially necessary pre-requisite.

Such think this is taught in the gospel, by the treatment he met with, who appeared at the marriage-feast without a wedding garment.

As also by the instruction of Philip to the Eunuch, who said *See here is water: What doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; and immediately he was baptized.*

In short, such take it for granted, that there ought to be in this world, as far as possible, a se-

paration kept up between the regenerate and unregenerate.

Others suppose, that all those ought to be admitted into the church with their children, whether regenerate or unregenerate, who do profess a belief of the essential truths of religion, and that they believe it their duty to comply with all the divine requisitions: That whenever they shall maintain heretical opinions, or in their external deportment, shall walk contrary to the rules of the gospel, they ought, by the church, to be reprov- ed and admonished, and if found irreclaimable, suspended and finally cast out.

These think that the ordinances of the gospel are seals of God's covenant of promise, in which he manifesteth his gracious intentions, makes overtures and promises, and sets his seal to those promises, then assuring us of their validity, and calling upon us, in this state of probation, where means are necessary, to attend to those overtures and firm-sealed promises.

And, in this view, such think God's covenant with Abraham is called a covenant of promise.

These think that unregenerate men may be considered and treated as members of Christ's church on earth, as they conceive infant baptism of divine appointment—that observation and experience evinceth that the posterity of believers are not all regenerate, and suppose there is no example or di-

rection in God's word for casting a person out of the church for other crimes, than heresy or overt acts of wickedness.

In a word, that there are many members in Christ's church on earth, who never were designed for membership in heaven—that they are taught this by being directed to let the tares grow among the wheat; also, in the parable of the foolish and wise virgins; likewise, where, by our Lord, the gospel is compared to a great net, which caught of the fishes, good and bad.

As also, by the threatening to the branches, in Christ the vine, which bring not forth good fruit; and by the Jews being informed, that they were broken off the good olive by unbelief, which sheweth, that though they had not regeneration and saving faith, yet they had enjoyed a standing in the church.

Many truly valuable and spiritual members of Christ's church there have been, and still are, who think thus differently respecting admission of members; and the wise, candid and liberal, in either scheme, are ready to acknowledge difficulties in the plan they have adopted; and there are but few who think these differences in sentiment a sufficient reason for breaking Christian or ministerial communion; especially, as all agree, that God requireth of all, supreme love to himself, and repentance and faith in Christ, and that without these, none, however otherwise qualified, can perform

any duty acceptably; and these exercises are what Christians and individuals are frequently exhorted to, and without which they must finally be lost.

Having dwelt so long upon the diversity of sentiment, may be considered rather as a digression, and, therefore, I shall conclude this head, at once, by observing, that those professors, I have been describing, and their children are the individual members of whom the churches of Christ on earth are composed.

I now proceed to show,

II. How these parts are united, so as to constitute one body.

Here I think it would be proper,

First, To consider the union that subsists between the members, and Christ the head. And,

Secondly, The union that taketh place between the members themselves.

I. With respect to the union between the members and Christ the head, the following things are predicable, viz.

That it is of divine appointment that they who understand and believe the truths of the gospel, and make credible profession thereof, being baptized, shall be considered as sustaining a connexion to Christ the head of the church, that is, such a connexion as constituteth membership.

2. That all those who have not only the above-mentioned union, but have received of his spirit, and are made holy, and so are become the children of God by faith in Christ, are united with him in affection and interest. These are made partakers of the divine nature, are become one with Christ, even as he is one with the Father.

The former union I consider as dissolvable; and, therefore, Christ saith, *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away.*

The latter I consider as an indissolvable union, and agreeably to this Christ affirms, *He that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and I will manifest myself to him. And having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*

I proceed now,

2. To consider that union that subsisteth, or ought to subsist, between the members themselves.

Paul, to the Corinthians, hath these memorable words, *Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, that there be no division among you; but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.*

So also, Phil. iii. 16. *Let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.* And Phil. ii. 1, 2. *If there be, therefore, any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-*

mined, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

From these, and many passages of the same nature, I am led to conclude, that it is of divine appointment that they, who agree understandingly to make substantially the same profession of essential gospel-truths, shall consider themselves as members of the one catholic church of Jesus Christ, though they may reside in different branches of the church, and at a great distance. So that a common profession or confession of faith is the visible mean by which Christians become united.

3. They who are thus united, if they have received of the same holy spirit, by which their hearts are formed after the divine image; as they will most certainly love the Lord Jesus Christ supremely, so they will love one another as brethren; be united in affection.

Thus I have endeavored to shew how the parts of Christ's church are united so as to form one body.

III. I shall now proceed to consider some of the most important ends answered by such an union; which will illustrate this truth, that union ought to be sought after by the various parts or branches of the church.

1. Such an union is a compliance with the design of Christ, the head of the church, expressed by his apostles in sundry places, but particularly

in the passage before-mentioned. 1 Cor. i. 10. Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no division among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment. And, Let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same things. And, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord—of one mind. And, Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And the apostle affirms, that the body is not *one* member, but *many*. So that this is an undoubted truth, that the church is the body of Christ, and that that body consisteth of many members. And these members being exhorted to union, and to avoid schisms, sheweth that union is a compliance with the design of Christ, expressed by his apostles.

2. Such a union in profession, interest and affection doth greatly excite Christian endeavors to promote the good of the Church.

The welfare of the church is to be promoted, especially by the regular preaching of the word, which supposeth the receiving of the word preached—the administration and receiving of divine ordinances—the exercise of discipline and submission thereto. Pastors or teachers in the church supposeth there are some to be taught. Administration of ordinances supposeth there are some to whom the ordinances are to be administered. And rules supposeth there are some to be ruled;

accordingly, Christians are exhorted to *obey them who have the rule over them.*

And thus every member in his proper place, and according to the measure of the gifts he hath received, is, with care and attention, to seek the good of the whole.

Agreeably to this doctrine, Paul tell us, *That the eye can not say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary. And those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor, and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: But God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked; that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.*

3. Such an union in profession, interest and affection, which will powerfully dispose every member in his proper place, to do his duty, and submit to Christian counsels, admonitions, &c. will cause the church to be, indeed, like a city set upon an hill that cannot be hid; and thus beholders will be led to a conviction of their sin, and an acknowledgement of the truth.

4. Such an union among individuals, and particular branches of the general church, is most likely to guard against error; and we are to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. It also provides most effectually for the reproof and admonition of all the members and officers of the church.

Those who sin are to be rebuked before all; officers as well as members.

Paul directs Timothy that he should not receive an accusation against an elder, but before two or three witnesses.

5. The church being provided with proper officers, such union in profession, interest and affection, provides for the instruction of the ignorant, the support and comfort of the weak, the reclaiming of offenders of every character, the rejection of the obstinate, the restraining of the corruptions of many, who will never be eternally saved, the forming of the elect for eternal life, and promoting God's glory.

A few inferences, among the many that might be drawn together with a word of exhortation, shall conclude the discourse.

1. If the church of Christ, in a large view, consisteth of all the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven, and all professors and their children on earth; then in our addresses to the throne of grace, for our fellow-christians, we ought to extend our

ideas; and we ought also particularly to remember, that one great end to be sought after, while enjoying membership here, is preparation for membership in the church above.

2. If those *parts* of the church are united by a common confession to Christ the head, so that by profession before men they are entitled to membership; then much care is necessary in giving instructions to the ignorant, that they may make an understanding profession; and if the holy spirit be necessary to form the members of the church to holiness, in order to constitute an indissoluble union to Christ the head; then all church members may see the propriety of examining themselves, whether they have obtained the spirit of Christ, as that they are *one with him*.

3. If those who have agreed to make the same confession of the essential doctrines of religion, and have received of the same spirit to form their hearts after the divine image, are *the one body of Jesus Christ*, as Paul saith, *there is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism*; and if the valuable ends, that I have mentioned, are *most* likely to be answered by union, then we may infer the strong obligations that all are under to endeavor the edification of the church, and to preserve the unity of it.

4. We may, from the whole, infer, that those who break Christian and ministerial communion

with those who, they acknowledge, hold the essentials of religion, and whom they believe to be real Christians, are guilty of schism in Christ's church.

To conclude, Study the things that make for peace; endeavor to *keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.*

Do all in your power to promote the best interest of Christ's church.

Remember there is no member so weak or inconsiderable, but that it is necessary to the completion of the body.

And O, my hearers! rest not satisfied with that union to Christ which is dissolvable; the Jews of old prided themselves in their external privileges, and covenant relation to God, but were broken off the good olive by unbelief: *Thou standest by faith; be not high-minded but fear.*

O! be not satisfied until you have good evidence your hearts are renewed by the spirit of Christ, and you become one with him, never to be separated; and he, as your gloriously ascended head, grants you the effectual operations of his holy spirit working in you, and causing you to make increase in knowledge, love, repentance, faith, and holy obedience, to your own spiritual edification; and by the effectual workings of his spirit, causeth you to be really serviceable to the edifying of the body of Christ in love.

As you expect on the Lord's-day approaching, to commune together at the Lord's table, remember part of the church is in heaven; Christ the head is there, and a blessed company of those who have been cleansed by his blood and spirit; part of the church is on earth, with Christ and the members of his body: On earth you are now to hold communion; as one great end of this communion is, to prepare you to enter among the blessed, the general assembly in heaven.—Be diligent in seeking communion with Christ, that so from him as your living head, you may derive those communications which are necessary to form you more and more after the divine image, and to render you useful in the spiritual edification of his body.



S E R M O N LV.

THE EVIDENCES OF A GENERAL JUDG-
MENT FROM SCRIPTURE AND REASON.

B Y

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ACTS xvii. 31.

*Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will
judge the world in righteousness.*

THOUGH the doctrines of a divine Providence, and future state of rewards and punishments have been generally believed in all ages, and among all nations of the world; yet in every age there have been some who have denied them. Such there were in the days of the apostle Paul; for while he waited for Silas and Timotheus, at Athens, we are told he was encountered by the Stoick and Epicurean Philosophers, the former of whom acknowledged a Providence indeed, but resolved it into fate, a blind necessity, which destroyed all the freedom of the will, and made their wise men little, if any thing, inferior to the Gods; the

latter denied that the world was made by God, or governed by his Providence. They represented the Almighty as too exalted, too much taken up with his own superlative happiness to take any cognizance of the conduct or affairs of men, and placed the highest happiness in sensual gratifications. These two learned and contrary sects encountered Paul, and hearing him say much about Jesus, and the resurrection from the dead, they imagined he was a setter forth of strange Gods; and as by the laws of Athens, no person was allowed to preach or bring in a new God to be worshipped, without public authority, they took him and brought him before the Areopagus, the highest court of judicature in Athens, to whom it belonged to determine in religious matters, that he might give account of the strange doctrine he had preached. St. Paul, therefore, standing up in this august assembly, and being commanded to speak, took occasion from an altar which he observed they had erected with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD—with great address, to expose the gross idolatry and superstition of the Athenians; and at the same time, in sublime and lofty language, to describe the character of the true God, and the nature of the worship to be paid him; declaring that the God whom they ignorantly worshipped, was the God whom he preached, who made the world, and all things therein, who dwelleth not in temples made with hands, nor any shrine of man's devising, but is so infinitely supe-

rior, and so entirely independent, that he giveth life, and breath, and all things to all men, and, therefore, cannot be equalled by the wisest of mortals. But though he is thus exalted, and has borne long with the wickedness of men, as though he winked at, or took little notice of their folly, yet he was never unobservant of their conduct, but took particular cognizance of it; and now when such superior advantages of light and knowledge are granted by the publication of the gospel; he in a more especial manner commandeth all men every where to repent of, and reform from all their sins, as they will answer it at that solemn and impartial day, which, in order to manifest the equity of his government, to reward the good and punish the bad, he hath appointed to judge the world in righteousness. At the times of this ignorance, that is, of those gross conceptions, which a great part of mankind, for a long time, entertained of his worship and government, God winked, saith the apostle; that is, acted as if he overlooked, and did not bear a general testimony against them--*but now he commandeth all men every where to repent, because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness.*

The doctrine plainly contained in the text is, that there is a solemn and impartial day approaching, when by the appointment of God, all mankind, convened in one general assembly, shall be publicly judged, acquitted or condemned, and re-

warded or punished in perfect righteousness.— This is a doctrine confirmed by the whole tenor of the scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament. The Old Testament, it must be confessed, is not so clear and express on the head; yet even there we find a variety of passages, which not only decidedly speak of a future state of rewards and punishments, but which leads us to believe there will be a general judgment, or day of public decision, when the whole world of mankind shall be assembled, and their respective trials and sentences openly held and declared in the presence of all intelligences. *The Lord cometh, saith the Psalmist, to judge the earth; with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity. I said in my heart, said Solomon, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time there for every purpose, and for every work. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.* These passages seem plainly to intimate that there is to be a day of public decision of the final state of all men, according to their character and deeds. But the New Testament puts the matter out of all doubt. Not only the words of the text, but a variety of other passages both in the gospels and epistles declare this doctrine in the most express and decided terms. Our Lord, the judge himself, hath described this solemn day and its transactions in all the awful pomp and majesty which language will admit. *The Son of Man, saith he, shall come in the clouds of*

heaven in his own glory, and in the glory of his Father and all the holy angels with him; and he shall sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the one on his right hand and the other on his left; and the King shall say to them on his right hand, come ye blessed of my Father inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world; and to them on his left hand he shall say, depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels! To the same purpose, and in very similar language, the apostle Paul declares, that the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven; the Lord himself shall descend with the voice of the Arch-angel, and with the trump of God, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not his gospel. Hence, in view of this solemn day, he speaks of impenitent sinners, treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who, he saith, will render to every man according to his works, in that day when, as Solomon in a passage above quoted, long before, declared, he will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to his gospel—when they must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and every one give account of himself to God, and receive according to the deeds done in his body, whether good or evil. St. Peter saith, that the heavens and the earth which now are, are kept in store reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men—that

is, as some suppose after the judgment has past, and their sentence is declared; this world which has been the scene of their wickedness, shall be set on fire, and they consumed in the general conflagration, which will be the prelude to that external or unquenchable fire, into which, our Lord saith, the wicked shall be cast at the final judgment.

To this awful and terrible day, St. Jude saith, *the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, are reserved in everlasting chains of darkness—When the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all, &c.* And St. John, who had a revelation of what was to be in future, saw in his visions, all this awfully grand, and solemn process represented to his view, *I saw, said he, a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away, and there was no place found for them: and I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the book, according to their works, and the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them, and they were judged every man according to his works.* Thus we see it is the plain and decided doctrine of revelation, that God hath appointed a day of general judgment, when all mankind shall be publicly tried and adjudged to happiness or misery, according to their respective characters and deeds. And this doctrine, which is so

clearly and expressly declared by revelation, is also perfectly agreeable to reason; to which it is rendered credible, if not absolutely certain, from the three following considerations.

I. From the very frame and constitution of the human mind, in which there is a divine sense or conscience, which assumes to itself a sovereign prerogative of judging, approving or condemning all the various motives of the soul, and the actions which proceed from thence. There is no person, I believe, who is not in some degree conscious of this principle in himself, which dictates to him a great difference between moral good and evil; which directs and excites him to practise the one, and prohibits, checks, and sometimes restrains him from doing the other. Yea, where the heart is not rendered strangely callous, and monstrously depraved by habitual vice, it never fails to affect the soul with a pure and welcome joy at the recollection of any thing humane and generous; but with the secret lashes and poignant stings of horror and remorse for inhumanity and vice. No man ever departs from that standard of moral rectitude, which is established in his own breast, but he is punished with some degree of uneasiness. The man, who is guilty of injustice, cruelty, falsehood, dissimulation, intemperance, or uncleanness, may, by various arts, suppress the voice of conscience, and elude its corrections for a time, yet there are seasons in which this principle will revive

within him, and assert its right of examining strictly his behavior, and challenging and condemning him for it. It will often fill him, not only with secret shame and self-reproach for having acted unworthy of himself, but with distressing fears of what may be the consequence of his vices, from the justly-roused resentment of some superior being, which, though it fall not on him in this life, may in that which is to come; else why do crimes unknown to all but God, and him that committeth them, afflict with such severe stings of conscience? Why do frightful spectres haunt the dark assassin, and every shadow imprint paleness on his cheeks? Why are his nightly slumbers disturbed with dreary visions of the rack and executioner? Why doth he start from his couch, and in sad dismay, cry, "O mine enemy, hast thou found me?" Why does horror and disquietude of mind pursue him like an accursed Cain, wherever he goes, till unable any longer to bear the upbraidings of a guilty conscience, and the pangs of a wounded spirit, he either lays violent hands on himself, or turns evidence against his own life? Is it only the fear of man that thus tortures his imagination? Surely no. It is the indelible character, written on the heart by the finger of the Almighty, pointing out a judgment to man. The soul, secure of her immortality and future happiness, would manfully bear the most excruciating pains from an earthly judicature, was it not for the dread of that more awful tribunal above, be-

fore which she must be arraigned. The thought of this, like the hand-writing on the wall to Belshazzar, makes the whole frame to tremble—the knees to smite one against another, and the soul, O dreadful thought! to wish for annihilation.—This is no fanciful representation, drawn by the pencil of an heated imagination, but what may be confirmed, by a great variety of examples, from fact and experience. The force of this principle of conscience has appeared, in some very bad men, to be full as strong as I have represented it; forcing them to disclose and bring to light some of their most secret acts of wickedness, and throwing them, when they had nothing to fear from any power or authority on earth, into the greatest agonies and convulsions, upon a mere view of their own guilt, and the fearful apprehensions of a future vengeance, ready to fall upon them; which apprehensions have been sometimes so strong in their minds, that, by all the efforts of their wit—by all the pleasures and amusements of the world, and by all the methods they could make use of, they could not so stifle or bear them down, but they would give them extreme uneasiness and torment.

This appears to be, in some degree, the law of our nature, and inseparable from the very constitution of mankind, however diversified by place or education, that remorse and uneasiness should follow upon the commission of crimes. How can it be supposed that the Supreme Being, whose ten-

der mercies are over all his works, should so constitute our frame—should place this conscience—this monitor of right and wrong in the human breast, merely to tease and torment it—to raise a perpetual war between reason and appetite? If so, it is a question, as one saith, whether the brutes have not the better of man. “They are not kept in a constant ferment between fear and passion—they experienced not those disagreeable qualms of satiety and disgust, which attend, nor those poignant stings which follow the guilty pleasures of human creatures; but man is only happy while the vehemence of his desire draws him off from himself, and prevents his reflecting upon his guilt and misery; but the moment the object is enjoyed, the sense of his wretchedness returns, and fills his mind with remorse and loathing.” What gather we from hence, but that this invariable judgment of right and wrong, this universal approving or condemning of themselves, according as men act agreeably or contrary to the law or tribunal of their own minds, strongly indicates a final judgment before their Maker. The very idea of some things, as fit to be performed, and others not, argues some immutable law or standard, according to which actions are denominated virtuous or vicious, good or bad; and a law even supposes some person, who, with competent authority, hath ordained it; and consequently that he who hath made the law will be attentive to our actions. That our doing right will please him, but our doing wrong will

displease and offend him, is what we cannot believe without allowing that he will make his pleasure and displeasure sensible, in rewarding the good and punishing the bad; for it is absurd to suppose, that the Supreme God, who is altogether amiable, should make man and not require his love; that he should give him a law as the rule of his actions, and yet be regardless whether he attended to, and observed it or not. This would be to deny himself—it would be saying, Though I have framed thee, I claim no prerogative over thee—though I am supremely excellent and lovely, I desire not thy complacency and delight in me: Thy hatred is no crime. But this cannot be. Infinite merit and entire perfection require perfect love, and the want of it is an heinous crime, and deserves a suitable punishment.

This proves there must be a judgment or suitable retribution somewhere, either in this world or the next: But if we consider the nature of some crimes, we shall find them dyed with such aggravated guilt as no punishment, inflicted in this life, can equal. Herod, for instance, who raised himself to the throne of Judea by fraud—who maintained the possession of it by the murder of the lawful heirs, his greatest benefactors—who blasphemed his God—profaned his temples—destroying his priests, and extirpating his servants; who, to prevent the birth of the Saviour of men, or destroy him, if already born, slew all the infants in Bethlehem and its en-

virens, from two years old and under; and on his death-bed conscious how much like a tyrant he had acted, and how much joy his death would cause, to force mourners at his burial, collected large numbers of Jews, shut them up in prison, and bound his sister Salome, by an oath, to have them beheaded on the day of his death, that they, who would not weep for him, should weep for their slaughtered friends. Herod, I say, thus black with guilt, would have suffered but a very inconsiderable punishment, he would have made but an infinitely small satisfaction for the murders he had committed, and the distress he had brought on the innocent, even if, like Nebuchadnezzar, he had been deprived of his reason, driven from among men, to eat grass with the oxen, and afterwards restored to his right mind, and condemned to die by tenfold more complicated woe than history informs us he actually did. Since then, there are some crimes, to which no punishment, inflicted in this life, can be proportionate; it follows, there must be some more suitable recompence in a future state. All nations, even the most rude and barbarous, have, and do still look for some such judgment to come. The fabled Elysium of pleasant groves, mirthful friends, elegant banquets, and uninterrupted pleasures, which the ancients declare to be the allotment of the virtuous after death; and their tortures, the foul lake and dreary regions, so fancifully described by the poets, undeniably evince their belief of this truth. Hence, when St.

Paul preached of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, before Felix, the Roman governor; though he was a heathen, and unacquainted with the Christian revelation on this head—Felix trembled. Paul might have preached till he was weary on the subjects of righteousness and temperance, and the governor would have been unmoved, if he had feared no after-reckoning; but when the apostle enforced his doctrines of righteousness and intemperance, (each of which Felix had flagrantly violated) with the tremendous argument of a judgment to come—Felix trembled. This coincided with, and roused all his fears. The cries of an injured husband, Azizus, the Emyfenian king, whose wife Drusylla he had seduced from his bed, and with whom he then lived in an adulterous commerce, rung in his ears, and called for vengeance against him; nay, the cries of an injured province, whose coffers he had unjustly robbed, and whose people he had cruelly oppressed, stung him with keen reproach. The proud Givema, sensible of his crimes, and fearing a judgment to come, shook with trembling on the throne of justice—he who sat to judge, sunk into the humble situation of the prisoner Paul at the bar. His conscience cites him like a condemned malefactor before a more august tribunal, where he knows there is no shuffling; but he himself, even to the least iota of his faults, obliged to give in evidence. His thoughts troubled him—he abruptly stops the minister of Jesus in the midst of his sermon—his

quivering lips with difficulty uttering, *Go thy way, Paul, at a more convenient season I will call for thee.* A judgment to come was a principle of his own—a creed which all men allow, for all men, saith the apostle Paul, *are a law unto themselves, having the work of the law written on their hearts, their consciences, meanwhile, accusing or excusing one another, until the day in which God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.*

II. The present mixt state, or unequal distribution of happiness and misery in this world, renders it exceedingly probable, if not absolutely certain, that there will be a future judgment—a day in which a more equitable retribution of rewards and punishments will take place. To see one event happen to the righteous and the wicked, or to see vice triumphant, and virtue persecuted, without hopes of its ever being otherwise, not only robs the good man of one of his surest anchors in time of trial and tempest, but casts an inextricable gloom upon the government of the Sovereign Ruler of the universe; and exhibits him in the light of an impotent, an unjust, or tyrannical governor; for we sometimes see those, who according to all the rules we have of judging of characters, are the excellent of the earth—men of the greatest probity and goodness—who yet pass through this life under a variety of sorrows and sufferings, from which many of the wicked are, in a great measure, free. We sometimes see the good man living in

extreme penury and want, distressed even for the necessaries of life, while the wicked enjoy plenty and abundance—*their eyes stand out with fatness*, as the Psalmist expresses it—Yea, the good man is sometimes borne down and cruelly oppressed by the wicked—he sacrifices his fortune, his liberty, and his life, for the sake of a good conscience; while the wretch, who is the guilty cause of all his calamities, riots in the plunder as though he was rewarded for his iniquity. To be convinced of the truth of this observation, cast your thoughts back to the treatment of those holy men, the prophets and apostles, of whom the earth was not worthy; a brief detail of whose sufferings we have in the 11th chapter to the Hebrews.—How were they distressed on every side, even for the common necessaries of life, and put to the most excruciating torture, for the sake of their religion?—*They had trials of cruel mocking and scourging, moreover of bonds and imprisonment—they were stoned, sawn in sunder, and slain with the sword—they were destitute, afflicted and tormented.* Reflect a moment upon the sad tragedy—the cruel butchery made of the Christians in the ten persecutions under the Roman Emperor, and afterwards of the martyrs under the Papal Inquisition. How has every province been stained with the blood of religious men, and every soil fattened with slaughtered thousands!

“The helpless innocent (saith the elegant Mr. Burgh) is brought fast bound to the rack, where no

friendly eye glances compassion, no voice of comfort is heard; he kneels, he weeps, he begs for mercy by the love of God and the bowels of compassion. The unfeeling monsters talk of heresy, and the profanation of their rights. The rack is prepared, the ropes are extended, the wheels are driven round, the bloody whip and hissing pincers tear the quivering flesh from off the bones; the sinews crack—the joints are torn in sunder—the pavement swims in blood. The blood-thirsty persecutors glut themselves with cruelty. No thunders roll, no lightnings blast their guilty heads!" And can we suppose that a righteous God, who sits at the head of the universe, and beholds all these disorders, will suffer such impieties to go unpunished, or such virtue unrewarded? To suppose it, is to suppose that he cannot, or that he will not rectify these disorders; either of which is impious and absurd—for the very idea of a God, supposes him clothed with strict justice, and armed with almighty power—having a disposition to do perfectly right to all intelligences, and ability to execute all his desires: therefore, according to his nature and disposition, as he is the righteous God, so he will judge and do righteously—rectify every apparent disorder, and treat or render to all intelligences according to their real character and work. But as we do not see this done in the present state, but one event happening often to the evil and the good—or the good distressed and depressed,

while the wicked are prospered and exalted; we reasonably conclude there is some future time or day approaching, when God will assuredly *judge the world in righteousness*, and render a suitable retribution to all men, according to their character and deeds. And that this judgment or trial will be held, and their respective sentences proclaimed, in the most public manner, as intimated in a variety of passages of sacred writ, seems highly probable, because,

III. It is not easy to conceive how the justice of God, in the respective sentences of the righteous and the wicked, can otherwise be so fully displayed—Much of the wickedness of sinners, lies hidden in the heart, and many of their crimes are committed in secret—They sometimes put on the form and appearance of religion, as a mask to blind the eyes of the world—to answer some sinister ends—and, with all their outward shew and appearance of saints, are the most arrant hypocrites at heart. On the contrary, much of the goodness of the righteous also consists in the hidden life; the inward exercises of faith, love, purity, meekness, humility, holy mourning for sin, and resolute watchfulness and strivings against the power of temptation. Many of their good deeds of piety and charity are also done in private, without any other witness than God and themselves, or those who have been partakers of their beneficence.—Much of the true character both of the righteous

and the wicked; yea, of that which is the best part of the one, and the worst of the other, we see then, is often unknown to the world; and how shall it be made known, and the justice of their respective sentences appear to all intelligences as it ought, but by some public manifestation? How, according to all human conception, can this be so well done as by a public judiciary process before the assembled Universe? Hereby, the virtues and graces of the righteous on the one hand—the repentance, faith and love with which they returned to God, embraced the Saviour, and submitted to his laws—On the other hand, the unbelief, impenitence, and incorrigible wickedness of sinners, by which they shut their eyes against the light of the glorious sun of righteousness, and refused to receive, or be governed by him, will be set in such a plain and striking contrast, as will reveal and make their true characters most extensively known to all intelligences, who, with one voice, will acknowledge the justice of the sentence, saying, *Hallelujah, salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, be to the Lord our God, for true and righteous are his judgments.* From the whole, then, we conclude, that as even the light of natural reason leads us to believe that God will, in some future state judge, reward or punish, every man in perfect righteousness, so it is agreeable to reason, as well as the express declarations of scripture, that this judgment shall be passed in the most public manner, in the words of the apostle, that *God hath appointed a day*

in which he will judge the world in righteousness—when we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ—give account of ourselves ; and every work, with every secret thing be brought into judgment.

I now proceed to make some practical inferences and observations from the subject, which, by the blessing of God, may be influential to deter us from sin, and comfort our hearts, under all the trials and disorders of this changing scene.

1. This doctrine of a judgment to come, clears up the mystery of divine Providence, and indicates the ways of God to man in many of the dispensations of this life, which, without it, appear “puzzled in mazes, perplexed in errors—clouds and darkness rest upon them.” To see the good man emerging from the clouds of spiritual ignorance, and the thralldom of satan’s power, rejoicing in the works of his Maker, his heart and his hand still moving the same way, to serve the Lord ; to see him cut down in the bloom of life, in the midst of his strength and usefulness, or suffered to drag out his life in poverty, pain and distress, while his wicked neighbor, who bursts the law’s inclosure, robs the hireling of his wages, and oppresses the widow and the orphan, is crowned with wealth, lives in ease and luxury, and feels no pangs in his death ; the facts alone considered, give but a melancholy idea of the government of the Sovereign Disposer of events. What gloomy thoughts are apt to overspread the mind ? How can it be con-

sistent with the justice and goodness of God, we are ready to say, thus to afflict his friends and favorites; and thus to prosper his open and avowed enemies? Better to our short-sighted view it would appear, if prosperity and happiness always immediately attended the righteous, and punishment and misery the wicked. But a general judgment unravels the mystery, clears up the whole scene, and makes it appear one wise extensive plan; when all difficulties which may at present perplex our minds, with respect to the ways of divine Providence shall be removed, and the wise designs which we cannot now fathom or see through, shall be made known.—As eruptions, earthquakes and inundations denote the dissolution of the natural system, and sickness and disease of the natural body, so do the wickedness and impiety of man denote that the present state of imperfection must cease; a state of retribution take place, and every present disorder that appears to impeach the wisdom or justice of the divine government, be rectified. When instead of the reign of sin, it shall be the reign of God and perfect righteousness. The pious man shall be no longer undistinguished from his impious neighbor: It shall be known and publicly revealed, who serveth God and who serveth him not. The impenitent and incorrigible sinner shall receive the fruit of his wickedness, the just wages of his evil deeds, tribulation, anguish, and everlasting shame and contempt; and the righteous an exceeding great and eternal reward—

glory, honor and immortal happiness—infinately out-weighing all they have done or suffered for God in this life; and thus shall God and his government be justified to all intelligences.

2. This doctrine of a future and general judgment affords matter of comfort and support to the righteous, to all who truly love and serve God in every situation of life. To consider that the good man is the constant object of the divine care and protection, that however great his sufferings may be in this world of sin and imperfection, yet he is never utterly forsaken of God, but, in his lowest depression and greatest sufferings, he beholds him with an eye of approbation and tender regard, and hath promised that all things, however distressing, shall work for his good; yea, that those present temporary evils, grievous and adverse as they may be, or appear, shall work for him an exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory. This consideration, when drops of joy are few, and troubles many, bears up the soul with a divine fortitude. When loaded with unjust reproach, the good man's name is cast out and reviled; or when proud and powerful oppressors vent their rage and crush him under their feet, then how sweet and comfortable is the thought, that his witness and avenger is in heaven, who will not suffer his virtue always to be under a cloud of aspersions, nor the wicked always to triumph over him, but will bring forth his righteousness as the morning, and his innocence as the

noon-day. This, like an anchor to the soul, buoys him up in every adversity and trial—makes him exult in agony, and pronounce even the flames and the gibbet a bed of roses. In short, when fortune, friends, and every earthly comfort forsake, or are torn from the good man, then a righteous God, his compassionate Father and just Judge, is his refuge and exceeding great reward. That God is righteous, and will judge the world in righteousness, is his comfort and support in the darkest hour of affliction and distress. It was the firm belief of these heart-cheering truths which made holy Job, when laboring under a weight of woes, break out with such enraptured confidence. *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.* But take away this belief and this hope from the good man, and his sun hath set in darkness, and thickest gloom overwhelms his soul.

3. This doctrine is matter of just terror to the wicked. It shews that vain are their hopes, and short will be their triumph. However they may now be exempt from every disastrous event, and flatter themselves that to-morrow shall be as to-day, and much more abundant—That God sees not nor regards their impiety, nor will call them to account for their iniquities; yet to their sorrow

shall they find, that long-suffering is not forgiveness. Though God acts for a time as though he winked at, or took little notice of their conduct, yet divine judgment, with no tardy steps, pursues, and swift vengeance will, in the end, overtake them. *One day is with the Lord as a thousand years. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* But the day of the Lord will come—that solemn and impartial day, which he hath appointed to judge the world in righteousness, will come—it will come speedily and suddenly, as a thief and a snare upon the world. For, *behold, I come quickly, saith the Judge, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according to his works.* The Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not his gospel. Then shall they be stripped of all they loved and delighted in, as dear in this world, and be made as completely miserable as they have made themselves sinful. Their true character shall be revealed, all their hidden wickedness and secret crimes, yea, the very thoughts of their hearts shall be brought to light, publicly proclaimed and exposed to the just scorn and contempt of all wise and good beings. Their own consciences shall upbraid them with the justice of their doom, and fill them with the most painful inward remorse and self-loathing, for having acted so mean

and shameful a part, so unworthy of their rational nature, so ungrateful to the best of benefactors, and so destructive to their own souls. This, like a never-dying worm, will ever gnaw at their heart-strings—like a barbed arrow pierce them to the quick. Thus shall all who die in impenitency rise to everlasting shame and contempt, in the painful sense of their own folly and baseness, and the just abhorrence of all good beings. With these reflections shall they go away *into everlasting punishment—into the fire prepared for the devil and his angels; where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched!* How vain then are all the attempts of sinners to conceal their crimes from the eyes of men like themselves, when the eye of God is upon them, all things open and naked to his view, who will one day reveal, not only their secret actions, but the very thoughts of their hearts to the assembled universe.

How foolish! yea, what madness is a life of sin, however prosperous, which must shortly end in such exquisite, never-ending misery! How much wiser was the conduct of Moses in *choosing rather to suffer even affliction with the people of God, with a view to the recompence of reward, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season; at longest, soon to end and be succeeded by pain and misery; esteeming even the reproach of Christ, upon such conditions, and all the indignities and sufferings, to which a steady attachment to his cause and peo-*

ple might expose him—a greater honor than all the glories of a crown, *greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt.*

4th. *And lastly.* If God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, when we must all appear and stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, to give account of ourselves, and receive according to what we have done, whether it be good or evil—then how just is the apostle Peter's inference on this subject. *What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?* Looking for, as we are hastening to this great and solemn day of God, wherein, or at the conclusion of which, *the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.* Of what infinite importance is it that we give all diligence, that we may be found of our judge in peace, without spot and blameless? Sensible that we are sinners, fallen guilty creatures, who have, in a thousand ways, transgressed the divine law, and thereby incurred the righteous displeasure of our Maker and Judge—How should the thought of this solemn day of reckoning lead us all to speedy, deep and sincere repentance for our sins. Convinced that rivers of tears can never wash away the stains of guilt, nor the deepest repentance cancel past obligations to, or atone for the transgressions of a law, which requires perfect, sinless obedience, in all respects, and at all times. How should the thought of this awful day of righ-

teous judgment, engage us to fly to, and by faith, lay hold on the Lord Jesus Christ, that we may, as the scripture expresses it, be washed in his all-cleansing blood, *and be found in him, not having on, or depending upon, our own righteousness, which is incomplete and imperfect, but the righteousness of Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every soul that believeth.*—Assured, that without holiness, no man shall see the Lord, how solicitous should we be that our faith be a lively operative principle—working by love, purifying the heart, and overcoming the world. How careful should we be; how should we labor and strive to eradicate from our hearts every inordinate appetite and passion, to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit—perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord—to have our lamps trimmed and burning—all our graces in lively exercise, and ourselves in a condition of actual readiness, like men, who every moment expect the return of their Lord to judgment! This is the influence which it might reasonably be expected, the thoughts of this solemn event would have upon us all; and this influence it certainly would have, were the thoughts of it properly realized and brought home to the mind. It is plainly owing to inconsideration, the want of properly impressing the mind, by frequent and serious meditation, upon the certainty and solemnity of this interesting event, that men are so little influenced by it. Did men verily believe, and properly realize, that the eye of God was constantly

upon them, and a solemn day fast hastening, when they must give account of all their thoughts, words and actions, it would certainly have a mighty influence to restrain them from every sin, and incite them to every virtue.

As the best improvement, then, of this discourse, let me exhort you to give these reflections due scope—seriously meditate upon the solemn scene of the general judgment, and its awful transactions!—Anticipate the day in your thoughts, and impress the solemn representation, made of it in scripture, deeply upon your minds, as though it were now actually taking place. Think you saw the Lord Jesus Christ, the appointed judge, in his own glory, and the glory of his Father, and all his holy angels with him, descending in the clouds of heaven, with a shout of triumph, raised by millions of happy attendant spirits, with the voice of the Archangel, and the trump of God, piercing heaven and earth with this awful and awakening call—*Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment!* At the word, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, see countless myriads start from their grave—earth and sea, death and hell give up their dead—men of all nations, kindred and tongues—of all conditions and characters—the high and low, rich and poor, bond and free—the just and unjust—all stand before the bar of their judge, sitting on the throne of his glory, with anxious solicitude waiting their different sentences, already impressed on their countenances

by the sentences of their own hearts! Behold the books opened, and the dead judged out of the things written therein—the secrets of all hearts made known, and crimes long covered, as in thick darkness, now revealed as in open day! Imagine, O ye accountable creatures, ye saw all this, and say, how will ye stand the strict and solemn scrutiny! Impressed with these thoughts, take heed to yourselves, lest at any time *your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares*; for as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. *Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man. Amen;*



S E R M O N LVI.

THE DESIGN OF CHRIST'S COMING
INTO THE WORLD.

B Y

J O H N E W I N G, D. D.

And Provost of the University of Pennsylvania.

J O H N viii. 56.

*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw
it, and was glad.*

TO a race of sinful and wretched creatures, who expect deliverance from the ruins of their fall, and a restoration to the favor of God, through the interposition of the great Redeemer of mankind, nothing should appear a more proper subject of meditation, than the glorious scheme, whereby the benevolent Father of our Spirits has accomplished this important design. It is the only support, which a guilty creature can have, who is in any degree sensible of his perishing condition, and has any just apprehensions of the favor or displeasure of God. We find, that the saints of God, in all ages of the world, have supported themselves

with the notices which God has been pleased to give of his pardoning mercy, and of his gracious design to deliver mankind from their wretched condition. The salvation of man, by a Redeemer, was the mercy which God promised to the fathers; and although many ages passed, after the introduction of sin into the world, before the appearance of the promised Messiah, during which time the blessings of the gospel, and the method of dispensing them, were gradually set in a clearer light, as the fulness of time drew near, in which the Sun of Righteousness was to arise; yet still they trusted in the promise of a faithful and covenant-keeping God, that he would, in due time, raise up the GREAT DELIVERER for them. Adam and Abel, and Enoch and Noah became heirs of the righteousness, which is by faith, having firmly believed that the promised seed of the woman would, in due time, *bruise the serpent's head*, and destroy his usurped dominion among the children of men.

And Abraham too, the father of the faithful, *was transported with an earnest desire* (as the original should be translated) to see the glorious time of his appearance, and he saw it by an eye of faith, and was glad. He was comforted under the views of his guilt, and amidst the labors of his pilgrimage, by the prospect he had of this interesting event; while he firmly believed the gracious promise of God, *that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed.*

As the secret of the Lord might be with them that feared him, in a more peculiar and extraordinary manner, under that darker dispensation in which he lived, it is probable, that he had some particular discoveries of this interesting event for his own private consolation; especially in that singular trial of his faith, when he received the excruciating command from God; *Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering, upon one of the mountains, which I will tell thee of.* It is probable, that his ready obedience to this unusual command was facilitated by some private information, which he received at that trying conjuncture, that the sacrifice then enjoined was a symbolical representation of the method which God had determined to take for the redemption of mankind, by the sacrifice, death, and resurrection of his own Son. An inspired interpreter assures us, that he accounted *that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure, or symbolical representation.*

And if Abraham, the father of the faithful, was transported with the distant prospect of that glorious day, when the Lord of Life should be made flesh, and take upon himself, not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham; how much more reason have we to rejoice in the goodness of a gracious Providence, which has determined our ex-

istence in that glorious day of gospel-light, which the patriarchs and prophets desired to see?—When the angel announced the birth of our Saviour to the humble shepherds in the fields, he assured them, that he brought them *good tidings of great joy, which should be such to all people*. It is, indeed, the best news that ever came from heaven, and lays the most solid foundation for the joy and gladness of our degenerate world.

The more we consider the benevolent errand, on which the Redeemer came, and the glorious effects of his interposition in our behalf, the more should our hearts overflow with undisssembled love and gratitude to our merciful Deliverer.

The whole human race was involved in the mournful consequences of our original apostacy from God: Every mouth was stopped, and all the world was guilty before God. We all, like lost sheep, had gone astray, and were sunk into the most melancholy state of ignorance and folly, guilt and bondage. We had blinded our minds and darkened our understandings by unruly appetites and passions; effaced the original law of righteousness, that had been written upon our hearts, and corrupted all our principles of action. Hereby we had degraded our natures, and spoiled the beauty and harmony of our moral constitution. This disjointed and polluted state of the mind must be necessarily attended with a fatal alienation of heart from God, the source of life and happiness—from

his laws and government, and with a consequent inclination to submit to the ignominious slavery of sin and satan. Hereby we became guilty before God, subjected to condemnation, and delivered over to satan, the merciless executioner of the divine vengeance, to receive from him the just wages of sin, even death in all its formidable extent. In this miserable condition, we had no created eye to pity us—no created arm to bring us salvation, and must have sunk for ever under the insufferable weight of the divine displeasure, had not his bowels yearned over the ruined workmanship of his hands—had he not sent his Son to make an atonement for our sins, to rescue us from the bondage of sin and satan, and *to proclaim liberty to the captives, that the ransomed of the Lord might return with joy upon their heads.* Accordingly, he dispatched the Son of his bosom into our ruined world, with a commission from heaven to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself, and thereby to seal and publish a pardoning and justifying covenant by his blood.

With divine philanthropy he undertook the arduous mission. He voluntarily submitted to the law of God, and paid an unfinning obedience to it, in its most extensive requisitions, and thereby fulfilled all righteousness for us. He is every where represented, by the sacred writers, as perfectly innocent, and free from every instance of moral guilt; holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Nay, farther, he not only obey-

ed the law of God in all its latitude, but he also submitted to its penalty, which we had incurred by our sins, and paid down his sacred life as a ransom for us. Hence he is said, by the evangelical prophet Isaiah, to be *wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities; to have the chastisement of our peace laid upon him, that by his stripes we might be healed.* He is said to be *delivered up for our offences—to bear our sins, or the punishment of them in his own body upon the tree—to make his life an offering for sin—to die, the just for the unjust—to be made a curse for us, when he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him; and to have the iniquity of us all laid upon him, that by his death he might destroy death, and him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and bring us to God.*

Now the most plain and obvious meaning of all these and similar expressions, that are every where to be found in the sacred writings, is, that Jesus Christ suffered the penalty that was due for our offences, and that he died in our stead a substituted sacrifice for the sins of the world, that we might be delivered from the penalty of the broken law, and obtain the justification of life, through the redemption that is in him. And this doctrine of the vicarious satisfaction of Jesus Christ is sufficiently confirmed by all those passages of scripture, in which he is called the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world, and is said to be a sacrifice for sin, as the great antitype of the propi-

tiatory sacrifices under the law, which had their accomplishment only in him. As it was impossible for them to purge the conscience, or expiate the guilt of sin; and as they were only intended to prefigure the great atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we must conclude, from their being offered by sinners, and their dying in their stead, that the death of Christ, which is so often, and so expressly compared to them by the sacred writers, was designed to be considered by us as a proper atonement made by him for the sins of the world. The writers of the New Testament have scarcely left a single phrase appropriated to the propitiatory sacrifices under the law, which they have not expressly applied to the death of Christ. Now the proper notion of a sin-offering under the law was this—the guilty person laid his hand on the head of the victim which he offered, confessed his sins, and prayed, that the life of that innocent creature might be accepted instead of his own; hereby acknowledging the justice of God, in punishing his sin by his death, at the same time, that he expressed his hopes in the divine mercy, through an atonement yet to be made. Now as it was impossible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sin, or expiate its guilt, and it was, nevertheless, constantly used, by divine appointment, under the Mosaic dispensation, what can we rationally conclude, but that they were instituted as types and figures of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, whose blood cleanseth from all sin. If then, the sacrifices under the

law were substituted in the room of the guilty person, by whom they were offered, and yet could not expiate his guilt, or purge his conscience, but only prefigured or pointed out the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, whose blood cleanseth from all sin, we may rest assured, that he died in our stead, the just for the unjust, and bore the punishment of our sins, in his own body, on the tree, that we might be delivered from our obligations to punishment, and be entitled to eternal life, through the merits of his death.

Thus has he sealed a justifying covenant by his blood, by which we are delivered from condemnation, and are treated as if we never had sinned; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ, whom God hath set forth as a propitiation for our sins, through faith in his blood. For when God justifies a sinner, on the terms of the gospel, through the atonement of Jesus Christ, he is in the eye of God, and of the law, considered as a righteous person, and is treated as a righteous person, being freed from condemnation, and having obtained a legal right to the justification of life.

Hence he is invested with the glorious prerogative of forgiving the sins of those whom he has redeemed by his blood. In consequence of his having undertaken and accomplished the arduous work of our redemption, God has exalted him to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and

remission of sins. The power of Christ to forgive sins is a plain and intelligible doctrine, as every prince, from the nature of his office, must have the prerogative of forgiving offences against his government. Remission of sins is ascribed in scripture to the blood of Christ, as, by its being shed, that covenant was ratified and sealed, which ensures pardon and salvation to all that believe on his name. So that when they are pardoned, on their repentance and conversion to God, they are said to be washed and made clean in the blood of Christ; because they are pardoned and justified, in virtue of that covenant, which was sealed and ratified by his blood,

But, that we may have a still clearer notion of the way, by which we become entitled to the benefits of the Redeemer's purchase, let us attend a little to the precise meaning of our justification before God, through the merits of his Son.

The justification of a person supposes, that a charge is brought against him in open court, and that a plea is entered for him, either by himself or his advocate. If he is found innocent and not guilty of the charge, he is justified, and cannot be properly said to be pardoned; but if his plea is set aside, as unavailable, and he is found guilty, he may be pardoned, but cannot be properly said to be justified. Now this is easily applied in the affair of our justification before God. When we are charged with the violation of the divine laws,

we cannot deny the charge, and plead, not guilty; but must depend on the mercy of the judge for pardon and deliverance from condemnation. But although we fly to mercy for protection from the sentence of the law, yet this is not the whole of our plea. We plead an atonement made—a sacrifice appointed, offered and accepted, and a covenant made by God himself, and ratified by the blood of his own Son. Upon this plea, pardon is dispensed through a Mediator, *who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification.* So that gospel-pardon is forgiveness upon a plea, upon a covenant, and in a way that is consistent with the justice, as well as with the mercy of God; and, therefore, is justification as well as pardon. In a word, the Son of God has so pleased his Father, by his active and passive obedience, that he has exalted him to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins, and has given him authority to pardon penitent believers, and to justify the ungodly upon their conversion to God, and to bestow upon them eternal life, as the gracious reward of their obedience and fidelity in his service.

Yet still we are not to consider the propitiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ, as an incitement to the Father to forgive our sins, and to receive us into his favor, as though he had no compassion for us, until he was appeased by blood, and softened by sacrifice. No; he first loved us, when we loved not him, but were enemies to him by wicked

works. It was the essential compassion of his nature, and his unmerited love to the human race, that engaged him to find the Ransomer for us, and to lay on him the iniquity of us all. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* Nothing but the eternal complacency of the divine mind in his own adorable scheme, which he has concerted for the redemption of mankind, could have induced him to accept of the atonement of his Son for us, when he might have insisted upon our suffering, in our own persons, the penalty of his violated laws. Accordingly, our Redeemer himself every where represents his mission as from the Father, and says, that *he came to do the will of him who sent him.* It is, therefore, an unworthy and injurious representation of the invariable goodness of the Supreme Being, to suppose that he refused to be reconciled to his offending creatures, until he was prevailed upon by the intercession of his Son. But still his mercy and compassion for us must be exercised, in a way, that would support the authority of his laws, and the rectitude of his moral government; and maintain the essential claims of his justice and his truth, and manifest his regard to the happiness of his moral creation, in perfect consistence with the exercise of his pardoning mercy. The atonement of Christ is, therefore, to be considered as a glorious provision of infinite wisdom for the exercise of his mercy, in such a way as would vindicate

the authority of his laws, and illustrate the wisdom, the justice, and the equity of his government, by awakening, in the minds of his rational creatures, an awful sense of his holy indignation against sin, and a proper reverence for his laws; or in the words of a sacred writer, it is a gracious plan, whereby *God can be just, and the justifier of those that believed on his Son.*

We know not how far it might have countenanced a rebellion among his other rational creatures, and given them disadvantageous impressions of the Supreme Lawgiver, to have seen a whole race of guilty rebels pardoned and received into favor, without any satisfaction or atonement. But to prevent these ill impressions, God has shewn, in this amazing plan of our redemption by his Son, such a holy abhorrence of sin—such a regard to the honor of his laws, and such a concern for the happiness of his moral creation, that he would rather give his own Son to be a propitiation for our sins, than not to condemn sin in the flesh; and that, when man had sinned, nothing that mere man could do, should be of any avail, or of sufficient efficacy, to procure his pardon. When we see, by this astonishing plan of divine wisdom and grace, that God does not pardon even the penitent and reformed sinner, but only on account of the blood of Christ—when we see so much majesty and innocence given up to the tortures of the cross in our stead; and when we see ourselves delivered

from death and hell, by an expedient so amazing as the death of the only begotten Son of God, it should certainly inspire us with the highest reverence for the laws of God; with the greatest horror of sin, and with the warmest gratitude to our divine Redeemer, whose sacred side our sins have pierced, and whose innocent soul our transgressions have wounded. Such a view of our redemption must also have a natural tendency to constrain us, who are thus bought with the precious blood of the Son of God, to devote ourselves to his service, and to live *to him, who has loved us, and washed us in his own blood; and who has died for our sins, and risen again for our justification.*

Nothing is more evident, from the whole tenor of the New Testament, than that the design of Christ's dying for our sins, was not to free us from our obligation to holiness, but rather to lay us under stronger engagements to obedience; and that according to the gospel-covenant, none can expect to share in the benefits of the mediation and atonement of Jesus Christ, but such as turn from their sins, by a sincere and hearty repentance, and pay a cheerful obedience to his wise and good laws. The doctrine of Christ's satisfaction, when properly understood, as it is delivered in the New Testament, is so far from giving the least encouragement to sin, that its evident tendency is to impress the mind with a sense of its heinous malignity, and of the terrible displeasure of God against it. While

he promises pardon to the penitent, he has, at the same time, provided, that it should be dispensed in such a way, as would make an awful declaration of his hatred of sin, and vindicate the authority of his laws and government. What could have a greater tendency to prevent our abusing his mercy to licentiousness and vice, and to excite in us a holy fear of incurring his displeasure, than to consider, that he would not receive the penitent sinner into his favor, without a sacrifice of such inconceivable value, offered on their behalf, and that it was only on the merit of his sufferings that the covenant of grace was established, in which God has graciously promised to accept of our obedience, and to reward our fidelity in his service?

How welcome, then, should the news of this great Deliverer be to the children of men! With what raptures of holy joy should we entertain the glad tidings, that unto us a Saviour is born, who is Christ the Lord, and that the only begotten Son of God has come into the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself! Nay, farther, he came not only to deliver us from the punishment of our sins, but also to make provision for our deliverance from the power of our corruptions, and to purify us to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Knowing that it was impossible for us, while we were averse to the laws of God, and disaffected to his government, to be restored to his friendship, until the moral disorders of our souls

should be rectified, he came in the character of the great Physician, to heal our spiritual maladies—to cure our depraved natures—to make us holy, as he is holy, and thereby to unite us to the Author of our beings and the fountain of our happiness. He came to strike off the fetters of our slavery, and to release us from the bondage of sin, and the captivity of satan. He has entered into the house of the strong man armed, and bound him in chains. He has called to the prisoners with an awakening voice to escape for their lives, and, by his irresistible word, commanded them to go free. He came to put a stop to his progress, in blinding and bewitching the minds of men, and by the amazing force of gospel-light, and the sacred illumination of his holy spirit, *to turn us from darkness unto light, and from the power of satan to serve the living and true God.*

Hence it is, that he employs his gospel to break the power of sin in the soul, and to turn the heart by a genuine conversion, from the love and practice of sin, to the love and practice of godliness. When his gospel, that divine word of power and of truth, enters into the heart, and changes its principles and temper, we escape from the dominion of sin and satan, being made free from the law of sin, and becoming the servants of righteousness. Now the truths of the gospel are calculated to produce this glorious change, as they are the most important and interesting of any that we can

be acquainted with, and have a natural tendency to open the blinded eyes of our minds, and to make us wise unto salvation. The gospel of Christ sets before us, in the clearest and most striking point of light, the method by which alone we can escape from that destruction which hangs over our guilty heads, together with the most alarming motives and considerations, to engage us to fly from the wrath to come. And when it enlightens the mind and changes the heart, Jesus Christ thereby delivers the soul from the bondage of corruption, to serve God in newness of life. Such persons are then said to know the truth and to be made free by it. *If the Son make you free, then are you free indeed.* Now if liberty and an enlargement from an ignominious bondage be matter of joy and triumph, what reason have we to bless the Son of God, who by the instrumentality of his gospel, has given us the noblest and most honorable freedom that any of the sons of Adam could ever boast, whereby we are delivered from the power of evil habits, and vicious inclinations.

And that the gospel may prosper to the end, whereto he has sent it, even to the pulling down of the strong holds of sin and satan, he has purchased the holy spirit to accompany the preaching of his word, that it may be brought home to the heart with divine power, and effectual energy. It is the office of the holy spirit, in the sacred economy of man's redemption, to take of the things of

Christ, his doctrines and precepts, his arguments and motives, and to shew them to us in such a strong and convincing point of light, that they may transform us into the divine image, and bring our hearts and lives unto the obedience of the gospel. When men's eyes, therefore, are opened by the spirit of Christ attending the preaching of his word, they are, by his efficacious grace, delivered from the bondage of sin and satan, and translated into the glorious liberty of the children of God. And how should our hearts triumph in such a Saviour as this, who saves his people from their sins, both from the dominion and power of them, so that they shall not reign in our mortal bodies; and also from the ruinous consequences of them in the world to come!

Especially when we farther add, that he came not only to deliver us from the guilt and power and consequences of our sins, but also to procure for us immortal glory and blessedness. Herein all the sufferings of his life and death, and all the operations of his providence and grace, have their final accomplishment. It is his efficacious will, that those whom the Father has given him to be redeemed by his blood, should be with him where he is, that they may behold his glory, and be happy in the manifestations of his eternal love. Hence he has promised to come again and receive them to himself, when he has sanctified them by his word and spirit, and prepared them for an inheri-

tance, with the saints in light; and that their salvation might be complete, he has promised to unseal the prison of the grave, to call forth their sleeping dust from the house of corruption, and to rebuild the whole man, in a glorious immortality and ineffable joy. When he expired upon the cross, he conquered death, and him that had the power of death. And, therefore, at the appointed hour, when he shall come in the glory of the Father with his holy angels, he will issue the sovereign orders, that shall be heard through all the silent repositories of the dead, and send forth his angels to gather his elect from the four winds of heaven. Clothed with their Redeemer's spotless righteousness, and made perfect in his glorious image, their mortal part shall put on immortality, and they shall hear the transporting sentence pronounced by the mouth of their Judge, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!* And when the grand solemnity of the final judgment is concluded, he will lead them forward, amidst the joyful acclamations of their elder brethren, to those mansions of eternal rest and peace, which he has prepared for them with his precious blood. Millions and millions of ages shall then roll on, while they are enjoying the smiles of his countenance, and the ineffable manifestations of their Father's love; and when these are past and gone, their happiness is as far from ending, as it was the first moment of their introduction into the Paradise of God. *Eye has*

not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive of the dignity, the happiness or duration of their future inheritance. It is a portion large as their most extensive wishes, lasting as their immortal spirits, and worthy of God to bestow; and what should endear it still more to our affections, it was purchased at the expence of the precious blood of the only begotten Son of God.

A P P L I C A T I O N.

Behold now, my friends, with awful joy and wonder, the stupendous scheme of divine mercy and grace through a Redeemer! a world of rational beings rescued from over-whelming misery, and made everlastingly happy, if their own incorrigibleness in sin prevent it not! And say, what sentiments should this inspire?—Why, certainly sentiments of joy and gratitude too fervent to be concealed, and yet too big to be uttered! If ever joy and exultation were reasonable in our degenerate world, it is certainly reasonable on the coming of the great Deliverer of Mankind, in whom all the causes of joy and festivity conspire. Let us therefore, with the transported Patriarch, be glad that we have seen the glorious days of the Son of Man, and rejoice in the God of our salvation; while we contemplate, by an eye of faith, a spectacle more august and glorious, than was ever exhibited in the world before. Behold the adorable Son of God travelling in the greatness of his strength, and mighty to save—treading the wine-press of his Father's

wrath alone, expiating the sins of a guilty world, and shutting up the solemn scene with these comprehensive words, *Father, it is finished*; the great, the stupendous work is done; the universal sacrifice is completed, whose virtue and efficacy extends from the foundation of the world to its final conflagration, and which angels and men shall contemplate throughout eternity, with wonder and astonishment, with joy and gratitude!

And can we, my friends, who are the subjects of this marvellous grace, ever hear of this prodigious expence of divine goodness with a stupid insensibility, or a cold indifference? Can we think of it without hearts overflowing with love and gratitude to that compassionate God, whose bowels of mercy yearned over the ruined workmanship of his hands, and therefore, provided the Saviour for us; and to that glorious Deliverer, who being in the form of God, humbled himself unto the death of the cross, to raise us to the exalted privilege of becoming the sons and daughters of the most high God?—If we honor and esteem the distant patriot, with whom we have no connexion, and from whom we can derive no advantage; how much more should we honor and love the great Redeemer; the benefit of whose actions and sufferings extends to all nations and to all ages? What are all the heroes and patriots that ever lived, in comparison with the Son of God? What are the blessings which they have procured for

their generation, in comparison with glory, honor and immortality? Lighter than vanity when laid in the balance with a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. They may indeed be an honor to the country in which they live, and procure for it some temporary advantages; but our Saviour was born for the whole world, and his birth is *glad tidings of great joy to all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel.* Hard and obdurate must that heart be, that can attentively consider this amazing plan of our Redemption, without feeling the lively emotions of gratitude, and without being constrained by the powerful efficacy of his love, to live unto him who first loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.

And now, my friends, let me urge it upon your consciences, and my own, with all the importunity which a matter of such unspeakable consequence demands, to enquire, with impartiality, whether ever the design of Christ's coming into the world has ever taken place, with respect to our own souls? Has the terrible displeasure of God against sin, manifested in the death and sufferings of his own Son, convinced us of its ruinous nature and tendency to such a degree, as to engage us to hate it as the abominable thing which the Lord hates; and as that which occasioned the unparalleled sufferings of our blessed Redeemer? It is the vainest hope that ever deluded the fallen posterity of

Adam, that you can possibly have an interest in his death as an atonement for sin, unless you also feel the power of his grace, renewing the heart, and turning it from the love and practice of sin, to the love and practice of holiness. *For without holiness no man can see the Lord.*

He came into the world, not to make your repentance unnecessary, nor to release you from your obligations to obedience; but to render both your repentance and obedience acceptable through the merits of his atonement. He came to deliver you from the dominion, as well as from the punishment of your sins; and he never will accomplish one of these ends to any soul, but in conjunction with the other. So that those, who live under the unbroken dominion of sin in the heart, must inevitably sink down under the punishment of it, notwithstanding all that the Redeemer has done and suffered for the expiation of it; nay, their punishment will be greatly aggravated by all that he has done and suffered for the redemption of man. We have not a stronger demonstration of the unparalleled love of God for our degenerate world, in this marvellous plan of redemption, than we have of his utter abhorrence of sin, and of his unalterable determination to execute the fierceness of his tremendous wrath upon all the impenitent workers of iniquity. The compassionate Jesus, who bled and died upon Mount Calvary, to make an atonement for our sins, and to purchase the

sacred influences of his holy spirit, to enable us to repent and believe, and live in newness of life, and is now beseeching sinners to accept of them for these salutary purposes, will one day appear in clouded majesty, and, with unalterable determination, command that those his enemies, that would not have him to reign over them, should be brought forth and slain before him.

And can you, notwithstanding all this, be deaf to all these arguments of love and terror, and force your way to destruction, through all these restraints which are intended, in mercy, to bring you to joys unutterable and full of glory? Will you have no compassion on your own precious and immortal souls, until the last incurable wound be given, which shall seal you up in everlasting despair? How will you answer it to God, who has given his Son to redeem you from ruin? How will you answer it to Jesus Christ, who expired upon the cross, under every circumstance of humiliation and shame, to purchase eternal life for you, if you are found at last among the despisers of his grace? We appeal to your own consciences, that power which God has implanted in you, whereby you can look forward to eternity, and consider the consequences of your actions in another world; whether it be not inconceivably better to comply with the gospel-method of salvation, by faith and holiness, than to wander on in the ways of your own heart, and in the sight of your own eyes, un-

til you fall into the hand of the living God, and experience the irresistible power of his wrath! Would to God that we could prevail with finners to break off their sins by repentance, and humbly accept of life through a Redeemer on the terms of the gospel. But stronger arguments we cannot use. Nothing but the Almighty power of Divine Grace, and the quickening energy of the Holy Spirit, can bring the truths, the arguments, the motives, and the threatenings of the gospel, with sufficient efficacy to the hearts of finners. To the grace and power of God, therefore, we commit you, and beseech you, by all the arguments of love and terror exhibited in the death and sufferings of the only begotten Son of God, that you would cry mightily to him, for the renewing and sanctifying influences of his holy spirit, to create you anew to good works in Christ Jesus; that it may be indeed a matter of joy to you that a Saviour has been born into the world. And let us all depend upon the merits of his death, and the efficacy of his atonement for the pardon of our sins, and for the communication of his grace, to enable us to comply with the terms of the gospel-covenant. And let it be the business of our whole lives, to testify the gratitude of our hearts, for the love of God in Christ Jesus, by adorning his doctrines in all things, that when he comes again without a sin-offering to judgment, we may be found of him in mercy, and be admitted to dwell with him for ever in his heavenly kingdom. Amen.

S E R M O N LVII.

CHRISTIAN WARFARE.

B Y

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I CORINTHIANS XVI. 13.

—*Quit you like men—be strong.*

AMONG the many comparisons used in scripture to illustrate the Christian life, that of a fight or warfare is a principal one. To this the apostle evidently refers in the text. He addresses the believing Corinthians, as a general would his soldiers, who expected immediately to engage with the enemy. We find nearly the same words used by the Philistines, in exciting one another to battle with Israel; *Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: Quit yourselves like men, and fight.* It is not improbable that the apostle had this animated speech in view; and if not, it was natural with the figure in his mind,

thus to express himself. It is as though he had said, "You are like soldiers in actual war; behave, then, not as children, who are weak and easily intimidated; but exert that strength, courage, and fortitude worthy of men in an hour of trial and danger."

This exhortation is proper to be addressed to Christians in every age; and it is now addressed to you, my believing brethren: *Quit you like men—be strong.* I shall, *First*, mention the enemies with which you have to contend. *Secondly*, shew what is implied in the exhortation; and then conclude with some motives to encourage and animate you in the fight.

The enemies with which you have to contend, are generally ranked under these three classes; the *devil*, the *world*, and the *flesh*.

First, The *devil* is a watchful, cunning and unwearied enemy. After his revolt from God, he seduced our first parents, and has thus brought the whole race into sin and misery. Opposed himself to all goodness, he is become the tyrant and destroyer of human kind. *As a roaring lion he walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.* Though we are not ignorant of many of his devices, yet it is impossible to tell either when, and in what way he will assail us, or to distinguish precisely his suggestions from the corrupt desires of our own hearts. With these he co-operates. He knows the frame of our bodies, and has near access to our spirits.—

He presents evil under the specious appearance of good. He suits his temptations to the various dispositions of men, and to the different periods in their lives. He leads to presumption, and he drives to despair. He withdraws for a time, and waits an unguarded hour, that he may attack with the greater success. Sometimes he shoots, like fiery darts, dreadful and blasphemous thoughts, occasioning extreme uneasiness and horror in the mind.

With this enemy, my Christian soldiers, you have to contend; a fallen spirit, active, powerful, naturally subtle, and long versed in the practice of guile; not only, indeed, with one, but many; for though there is a great adversary, the God of this world, yet under him hosts are marshalled, whom he leads to war. The apostle, in speaking of the Christian warfare, reckons those evil spirits to be numerous and powerful. *We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities—against powers—against the rulers of the darkness of this world—against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

Secondly, The world is another powerful enemy. In this class we count the *men* of the world, and the *things* of the world.

The *men* of the world engage on the side of the devil. By their allurements they entice to sin, and by their reproaches, deter from duty. Not to mention the furious persecutions which they have sometimes carried on against Christians, and from

which we, in this age and country, are delivered, they are always dangerous. Their conversation and example are contagious. It requires no small resolution, at times, to withstand their smiles, and encounter their frowns—to adhere steadily and singularly to duty when the customs of the world all tend another way—to sacrifice popularity, and venture even character for the cause of religion.—It sometimes happens too, that those with whom the Christian is closely connected are his greatest opposers; when his foes are those of his own household. In this case the danger is peculiarly great. From others he may withdraw, but with these he is obliged to associate.

Under the *things* of the world we count *honors*, *profits* and *pleasures*. How dangerous these are, we see every day, in the fatal experience of others, and the state of our own hearts. We need, and may lawfully enjoy a share of them, but they too often engross our affections and attention. The Christian is in the more danger from this quarter, because he is called to engage in the pursuit of these, and under the appearance of duty, they lead him astray. He is apt to set a higher value upon them than they deserve, to repine under disappointment, and to be improperly elated at success; besides the temptation, there is to seek them by unjustifiable ways. *We cannot serve God and Mammon. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* The evil we have to fear is not

from the things of the world, which are, in themselves, good; but from that temper and conduct which they produce in us. This leads me to mention,

Thirdly, That the *flesh*, by which is meant the corrupt nature, is the most dangerous enemy of all. The principle of sin is not fully subdued in believers. This is the law in the members which wars against the law of the mind, and brings into captivity to the law of sin. Were it not for this, the attempts of satan would be unsuccessful. Were it not for this, the things of the world would have no dangerous tendency. *Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.*—This is the traitor within the walls, which betrays us into the hands of the enemy. Could we subdue this, we need not fear those without. The Christian, then, has to fight with himself. Remains of evil desires are still in his heart, and strive to prevail over him.

These are the enemies, my brethren, with which you are called to contend. Let not your hearts faint on the view of them; but, *quit you like men—be strong*. This exhortation implies,

First, That you banish unnecessary fears, and engage in the warfare with boldness and resolution. So much fear of an enemy as leads to watchfulness and caution, is highly useful. To despise an enemy is often the way to be beaten. Peculiarly in the Christian fight, *happy is the man that feareth always*.

There is a fear, however, which depresses the spirits and hinders exertion. This ought to be laid aside. Discouragements increase the difficulties; small ones are then magnified, and great ones assume a most formidable appearance; whereas, if encountered with patience, firmness and perseverance, those would vanish, and these lay aside their terrors. While an enemy is considered as dangerous, he ought not to be deemed invincible. To despair is to yield ground and encourage an attack. It is well known what advantage this temper gives Satan over believers, and how carefully he improves it. He then harasses them with distressing thoughts, horrid suggestions, and is only not permitted to drive them into final ruin. Believers, therefore, ought to maintain an undaunted courage and resolution.

Again, There is implied, that they fight in divine strength. In themselves they are, indeed, weak, and wholly unequal to the conflict; but the grace of God is sufficient for them. Hear the holy challenge of the apostle; If God be for us, who can be against us? Trusting in his power, and faithfulness to fulfil all his promises in Christ, they ought to engage with their enemies. He hath provided for them an armour which is proof against every assault. In putting on this and managing it aright, safety and victory are ensured.— My brethren, says the apostle, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole ar-

mour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit. Thus we see that, as in the ancient mode of making war among men, there were pieces of armour to protect the whole body from injury, and weapons with which to assail, so in the spiritual warfare, believers are armed and encouraged to go forth in the strength of the Lord. It need only be added,

Further, As implied in this exhortation, that they persevere in the combat. If they withdraw, or cease their exertions, they will be overcome.—The enemies continue their hostilities as long as believers are in this world. There is no rest or peace to them, but their whole life is a constant warfare. Let not him, therefore, that girdeth on his barness, boast himself, as he that putteth it off. Many, alas, who seemed manfully to begin the contest, and continued it for a time, being allured by the things of this world, or deterred by difficulties, have given it over, and returned to their former slavery. These are likely to fall a prey. He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. Let

me now mention some motives to encourage and animate you in this warfare.

First, Your cause is good and highly important. The apostle calls it *the good fight of faith*. Do men in the wars of this world, boldly venture their lives when persuaded that their cause is righteous? Much more ought Christians to encourage themselves. They are engaged in the best and noblest of causes; on the side of God, against every thing that is base, cruel, and oppressive. No less depends on the part they act than eternal happiness or misery. Do the men of this world fight for fading honors and emoluments? Is it for these that millions, in every age, have been slaughtered, and this earth covered with blood? And shall not Christians contend for *an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away; for a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge, will bestow on every conqueror*?—We admire the man, who, at the head of armies, has over-run nations, and spread his conquests far and wide; we almost adore him, who nobly withstands the iron-hand of oppression, and successfully vindicates the insulted rights of human nature; but the Christian soldier is a more noble spectacle, a more glorious character. Though not surrounded with those external things which attract and dazzle the attention of mankind, yet he possesses more true magnanimity, and more genuine worth. The judge of the universe approves, and exalted spirits

behold him with wonder and delight. Should not then the goodness of the cause, and the importance of its issue, as to yourselves, encourage and animate you my believing friends? Mahomet promised to his followers who fell in battle, immediate entrance into a Paradise; but to you, unerring truth hath given assurance of *fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.*

A second motive to animate you is, that you are engaged in the presence of many spectators. You act continually in the sight of the great and glorious God. His eye penetrates into the inmost recesses of your hearts. He will be your impartial judge, and from his hand you will receive your reward, or your doom. How far angels are witnesses of our actions is not certainly known. They are, however, not uninterested in the redemption of man. At the birth of the Saviour they sang together in heavenly strains, and have been frequently employed on messages of grace. We are expressly informed, that *there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth*; that the angels are *all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.* The apostle charged Timothy before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels.

The consideration of our being open to the view of those holy and exalted spirits, who have charge of us, and who earnestly desire our success, ought to inspire us with fortitude and resolution. Shall

we behave meanly in the presence of superior beings? Shall we disgrace ourselves in the sight of heaven? Could we suppose them to feel the least uneasy sensation, what grief and shame must they suffer on our account, when we act unworthy our character? Yea, what indignation, to see creatures redeemed at an infinite expence, and with the most glorious prospects before them, complying with the temptations of satan and the world, and yielding to the corrupt desires of their own hearts!

*In the third place, You fight under Jesus Christ, the captain of salvation. Are soldiers inspired by an attachment to their king? By a confidence in their leader? Surely believers may be of good courage, Jesus is the King of Kings. He is the author and finisher of faith. He leads you by his example, and encourages you by his words. Will you suffer me to introduce here an example from history, of the effect of the conduct and speech of an earthly king, before an engagement with his enemy? Or, is it not suitable, and may we not compare great things with small?—Henry the Fourth, of France, just before a battle, in which he obtained an entire victory, uttered a generous prayer in a voice, and with a countenance that inspired all who heard and beheld him, with like magnanimity; then turning to the squadron, at the head of which he designed to charge: “My
“ fellow-soldiers,” said he, “ as you run my for-
“ tune, so do I yours; your safety consists in keep-*

ing well your ranks; but if the heat of the action should force you to disorder, think of nothing but rallying again; if you lose sight of your colors and standards, look round for the white plume in my beaver; you shall see it wherever you are, and it shall lead you to glory and to victory." Examples of this kind fill the mind with great and noble ideas. We admire the man who, in the conscious integrity of his heart, boldly faces great and immediate danger, and inspires all around him with the like magnanimity. But, how little does every human example appear, compared with him who leads the armies of the saints; with him who conflicted with the powers of darkness; with him who gave his life a ransom; who, by his own power, rose from the bed of death; who triumphantly entered into everlasting glory; and who is conducting his followers in safety thither, through all the difficulties and dangers which surround them! What encouraging words are these, *Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. Because I live, ye shall live also.* Hear how he animates them from his celestial throne: *To him that overcomeih, will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am sat down with my Father on his throne.* Believers, your leader is great and successful; you fight under the banner of the cross; the motto is LOVE; be not afraid, how stern appearance soever your enemies may assume; for, *In the last place, You are sure of victory in the end.* The prospect of success tends greatly to

encourage in any undertaking; but in no earthly thing have you the same assurance, as in your spiritual warfare. You have the word of truth that you shall prove victorious. You are *compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses* from the beginning of the world till this day, who all declare that they have been *more than conquerors through him that loved them*. Your enemies are already subdued so far as that they can never recover dominion over you. Injure you they will, but cannot prevail; make opposition they will, but it is ineffectual. Jesus Christ by his blood has atoned for your guilt; by his grace he purifies your hearts; and he hath *spoiled principalities and powers, made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them*; yea, he hath entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for you. Should not this consideration encourage and animate you? He is a coward, indeed, who will not fight when sure of success; he has not the spirit of a man, who will not withstand the shock with victory in his view.

Let us remember at the same time, that though the enemies are conquered, yet our own exertions are necessary. In the Christian warfare we are considered as rational creatures, and as free agents. Dependence on divine strength, and endeavors of our own are perfectly consistent. If we sit down in negligence and inaction, we need not hope for victory. There are two extremes in this case, from one or other of which we are in danger.

The one is the neglect of due watchfulness, and the attendance upon appointed means, thinking that God will do all for us; the other is a too great confidence in our own strength, and not relying on the strength of the Almighty. What God hath joined let us not put asunder. Look around you and see the connexion established between the means and the end; see that the means are necessary to attain the end; and that these are not successful without the divine blessing. Believe that you must *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*; and that God must *work in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure*, otherwise you work in vain.

These motives surely are enough to keep you from dispondency, and to animate you against all your enemies. Your cause is good, and infinitely important. You contend in the presence of God and the holy angels; and under the banner of Jesus Christ, who will lead you to glory and to victory.

Allow me, on this subject, to expostulate a little with you, my friends, who have never engaged in the Christian warfare. Think, for a moment, on the condition in which you are, and the awful consequences of it. You serve the devil and your own wicked lusts. These have dominion over you, and will lead you to inevitable ruin. You cannot now fully reconcile yourselves to the service. There is that within you which tells you,

that you are guilty, and exposed to the displeasure of your Maker and Judge; but still you have neither will nor resolution to assert your liberty. *The wages of sin is death.* It now flatters and deceives you; it is, in the mean time, binding you fast, and you will, at length, be cast into utter darkness, where is *weeping and gnashing of teeth.* The Lord Jesus shall prove successful over satan and all who take part with him. You have joined the weakest side. All enemies shall be put under his feet. Hear that dreadful sentence which he will pronounce upon impenitent sinners of our race, when he comes to judge the world in righteousness; *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* If you now join on the side of those rebellious spirits, you must expect to share in their punishment.

My friends, there is yet hope. There is a treaty of reconciliation carrying on. Delay not to throw down the weapons of your rebellion. Flee from the camp of satan. Come inlist under the banner of Christ. He will reward you with glory, honor, and immortality. In justice he might have refused, before now, to listen to any proposals of peace. but he is long-suffering and patient. Come, and what is past shall be forgotten. He will *take away all iniquity, and receive you graciously.*

Are there any here who formerly seemed to engage in the Christian warfare, and have returned again to the service of sin? What has been the

reason of this conduct? Did you meet with difficulties which deterred you? Or, were the temptations of satan and the world too powerful for you? You have forfeited the name of soldiers. You are cowards and deserters. Go, ye dispirited men, we would not fight in such company. Separate you from the camp of Israel, that we may know who are our enemies. Or, rather, let me call upon you, my deluded friends, to return while mercy is offered. Return and disgrace the cause no more. Return and retrieve the honors you have lost.—*Quit yourselves like men, and fight.*

My believing brethren, to whom this subject is more particularly addressed, you have heard the enemies with which you have to contend; the duties to which you are called; and some motives to encourage and animate you. Why should any of you fear? May not each of you, under difficulties, say with the Psalmist, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.* Or, may you not adopt his more confident language, and say, *The Lord is my light, and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.* It may be but a struggle or two more, and the warfare is finished. After crossing the Alpine hills, would you now sit down

in inglorious ease? After so many victories already obtained, and when the enemies fly before you, would you lose the cause for ever? No, if you have the spirit of men—if you would not submit to the galling yoke of sin and Satan—if you would not suffer the reproaches of your own consciences, and the cruel scoffs and insults of tormented ghosts in their dungeons of eternal darkness—if you regard the glory of the great God—the love of a dying Saviour, and the inconceivable joys of heaven, yield not to the power of your enemies. *Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men—be strong.*



S E R M O N L V I I I .

T H E V A L U E O F T H E S O U L .

B Y

J O H N R O D G E R S , D . D .

One of the Ministers of the United Presbyterian Churches, New-York.

M A T T H E W xvi. 26.

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

TH E candor with which our Lord treats his disciples upon all occasions, is a high evidence of his sincerity, and no inconsiderable evidence of the divinity of his mission. He not only tells them what they have to hope for, but what they have to fear, if they would be his sincere followers. He states the terms of their discipleship to them with great sincerity, whenever a favorable opportunity offers; nor does he on any occasion flatter their vanity.

An instance of this we have in the verse but one that precedes our text: *Then said Jesus to his dis-*

ciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. The necessity, however, of being his disciples, hard as these terms may appear to a secure and profane world, is urged in the next verse, from the danger of neglecting the duty, and the benefits arising from a compliance therewith. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

This same duty is recommended and enforced in the words of our text, from the nature of the loss sustained by those who do not thus deny themselves for Christ, take up the cross and follow him. *For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

You will easily perceive, my brethren, our Lord's argument in the text, to induce us to be his disciples, is founded on the inestimable value of the soul. It is of more worth than a whole world. To gain a world and lose a soul, is to sustain an irreparable loss; for *what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* The mode of our Lord's expression evidently implies, there is nothing that can be given in exchange for a lost soul; and the reason is obvious, because there is nothing in all the world that equals our precious soul in value; no, nor all our world put together, for *what is a man profited if he shall gain the WHOLE WORLD, and lose his own soul.*

Our Lord supposes, in the text, for the sake of illustration, what, indeed, has never fallen to the lot of any one man; that could he possess the whole world, its whole sovereignty and wealth, its whole honors and enjoyments of every nature, and that to the highest degree possible, they would be a vain purchase at the expence of his soul.

What then must be the folly of those who sell their souls for so small a share of any of these?—Who sell them for a thing of nought!

What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

What I propose from the words, by the aids of the Spirit of Grace, is,

I. Consider the value of the soul in a few particulars.

II. The nature of the loss sustained by those, who lose their precious soul.

III. The danger of losing it.

Let us inquire,

I. Wherein does the value of this precious soul appear?

By the soul I mean, that rational and immaterial principle that is in each of us, by which we are distinguished from the brutes that perish, and

become wiser than the fowls of heaven. This soul is the offspring of God. Every soul of the human race receives its being immediately from him, without the intervention of any laws whereby it is propagated. He is in the most proper sense of the term, *the Father of our Spirits*. It is the observation of an eminent divine, that while all other beings were created by a single *let them be, and, lo, they were*, the sacred Trinity is represented as sitting in council on the creation of man. Thus, Gen. i. 26. *Let us make man*. It was not his body that was the subject of this consultation; for there are many bodies in the material universe as curious in their formation, and, perhaps, as glorious in their nature, as the body of man; and which, therefore, would have as justly merited the consultation of heaven. It was this immaterial and precious soul, as united to the body.

But to proceed: The high value of this soul appears,

1. From its *nature and capacity*.

I have just said that it is *spiritual* and *immaterial* in its nature. It does not consist of such gross and material parts as our bodies do; it is hereby raised far superior to them, and all the material universe, and becomes a partaker of the same kind of being with the angels of heaven; for they are spirits.—*Who maketh his angels spirits*. Yea, more, it is a partaker of the same kind of being with God him-

self, for *God is a spirit*. This, therefore, bespeaks its high dignity and inestimable value.

And from this spirituality of its nature is derived its capacity. It is capable of knowing God; not, indeed, in a perfect manner; for such is the infinite glory of the divine nature and perfections, that he cannot be fully known by any of his creatures. *None by searching can find out God—none can find out the Almighty unto perfection.* But the soul of man is capable of knowing something of the nature, the character and perfections of the Supreme Jehovah—That Jehovah from whom all our happiness, as intelligent creatures, is derived, *whose favor is life, and his loving-kindness better than life.*

This rational soul is also capable of knowing God's works—the sun, the moon, and the stars, which his fingers have framed. It is capable of knowing the various ranks of creatures in their several gradations—“Down from infinite to thee, from thee to nothing.” Many of these it has ranged into classes, and gone far in explaining their nature and their laws: And O the wonders of wisdom, power, and goodness it has discovered in them! The works of God, both in creation and providence are among those mirrors in which we behold the glory of the divine perfections.

For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. But it is this rational soul that enables us to see this glory, and render the honor of it to the great God.

This soul of ours is that also which constitutes us the subjects of moral government. We are hereby capacitated for knowing truth and error, sin and duty, and for rendering a rational obedience to the divine law. We hereby become capable of rewards and punishments; in a word, capable of the whole system of duty, which is due from our race to God, and capable of all its consequent happiness. And this happiness is *eternal* in its duration, as well as *rational* in its nature.— For these souls of which we speak, are in their very nature *immortal*. You have heard that they are immaterial—they have nothing in them that tends to dissolution—they shall survive the ruins of the body—survive this world itself, especially in its present form—bear date with an unwasting duration, and exist while God himself exists.

This is a property of the human soul of the highest moment to be attended to, and which instamps an infinite value upon it—*it is immortal*. When yonder sun shall have grown dim with age—when the moon and the stars shall enlighten our world no more, these souls of ours shall exist, and flourish in eternal youth. From hence the soul derives its capacity of enjoying God, and of being

happy in his immediate presence *for ever*. And this, too, greatly tends to illustrate the transcendent excellence of its nature.

And surely that must be highly valuable which is thus *spiritual* in its nature, *immortal* in its duration, and capable of such extensive knowledge usefulness and happiness.

2. The value of the human soul appears from the price that was paid for its redemption. This was none other than the blood of the Son of God. — Forasmuch as we know that we were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from our vain conversation received by tradition from our fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. The apostle calls the price of our redemption the *blood of God*. Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

The person who shed this blood was God as well as man. He was that divine person, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. There is not a perfection of the divine nature, however essential to deity, or incommunicable to the creature, but what belongs to him, as well as the Father, and to him in the same sense with the Father. This is he who assumed our nature into a personal union with his divine. How glorious the sight! Deity and humanity conjoined in one mysterious person, and yet so as to

preserve each nature distinct from the other. This was he who fulfilled all righteousness for us, by a life of the most perfect obedience to the precepts of the law. This was the person who hath redeemed us to God by his blood. And did our time admit of considering here the nature of those sufferings our Lord endured previous to his death, and in dying on the accursed cross for us, it would greatly tend to enhance the value of this price in our estimation.

I shall only observe, at present, that they include all the agonies of Gethsemane—all the insults he endured from thence to Mount Calvary, and all the exquisite anguish of the cross, until he cried, *It is finished*, and gave up the ghost. But all this, my brethren, serves to illustrate the high value God sets upon that soul which he hath redeemed at so expensive a rate. Would God give the Son of his love to all that ignominy, suffering and death, to redeem a thing of nought? Verily no.

3. *The display of the perfections of God, exhibited in the plan of saving lost souls, through Jesus Christ, tends greatly to illustrate the value he puts upon them.* This plan was laid from all eternity. Then it was the sacred Three concerted and covenanted with each other respecting this important business, and each person in the adorable Trinity took his part in the divine design, and engaged for its execution in the fulness of time.

Thus it was, God loved us with an everlasting love. *I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.*— But what was it they deliberated upon? Whether they would save lost sinners? No, this was graciously fixed. It was the *way*, the *manner* of doing it, so as to secure the honor of God's moral government, and exhibit the glories of the divine character in a proper point of light. The proposals of mercy and claims of justice would *seem* to oppose each other.

Mercy was inclined to save the sinner, while justice insisted upon his death, as the proper demerit of his sin.

Holiness too had its claim upon the sinner, and absolutely forbid his salvation, unless conformed to the divine image; while truth insisted upon the execution of the threatening of the law on the transgressor. But in the plan of saving men through Jesus Christ, all these several claims are answered, and gloriously harmonize. God can now *be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.*

The *mercy* of God is illustrated in that the sinner is saved. The *justice* of God, in the satisfaction made by Christ's obedience to the precepts of the law, and his suffering its penal sanction, in the manner you have just heard, as the sinner's surety. His *holiness*, not only by the obedience of our Lord's life, which, indeed, is one of the brightest

displays ever made of it; but also by that purity of heart and manners, to which this plan of salvation recovers us, by the agency of the spirit of grace. His *truth* is illustrated, by the full execution of the threatenings of the law, in all their dread extent, though not on the sinner's own person, yet on the person of his surety; and his *faithfulness* in the fulfilment of his promises to the divine Mediator, and to every true believer in and through him; while the *wisdom* of God shines with distinguished lustre, in concerting and executing a plan that unites all these *seemingly* jarring interests; a plan that so fully provides for securing and illustrating the divine honor, and the saving of lost men. Thus, *mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.*

From this brief sketch you see what a mirror of divine glory the plan of our salvation through Jesus, Christ, is. Here, *we all with open face behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord.* Here, *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines in the face of Jesus Christ.* But what is all this about? Whose salvation are the three persons of the adorable Trinity thus planning and executing? That of fallen angels? No; that of *human souls.* It is their salvation which exhibits this glorious display of the divine perfections and character. And O, in what an important point of light does this set this soul of man! How inestimable its value, about whose salvation not only every person in the Trinity, but

every attribute of the divine nature, is thus, some how or other, employed, and in and by which it is glorified!

4. *The provision God has made for the recovery of this soul to his image, and a capacity of enjoying him as his portion, is a further evidence of its high value: He has given us the sacred scriptures, as a rule both of faith and manners. We are here taught all that is necessary for us to know and believe, to the saving of our souls. We are here taught the whole compass of our duty to God, our neighbor and ourselves. Taught, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Thus, all scripture being given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work. And in this respect, among others, the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. And you will please carefully to observe here, that the truths contained in the sacred scriptures, are the great means chosen and appointed by God for effecting our personal holiness. To this accords our Lord's prayer for his disciples.—Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.*

It is for the same end the ordinances of the gospel are instituted. This is one great end of the sabbath, and all its appointments. It is, that we may, by these, hold an intercourse with God while

in this life, and thus be trained up for holding the most delightful communion with him in glory.— We read, that *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* That *faith* by which our hearts are purified, made like God, and we trained up to a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. For the same gracious purpose has God appointed the gospel-ministry, which is represented by the apostle, as among the richest of our Lord's ascension-gifts. *When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man; unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.* But I must not omit adding here, that as all these were but means, and, therefore, could not effect any thing in themselves, God has provided the holy spirit for rendering them effectual. This is the part he assumed in the plan of our redemption. Hence he is styled *the Spirit of Holiness*; and we are said to be *saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour*; and this great work is elsewhere styled, *the Sanctification of the Spirit*, because of his agency in effecting it. But O! the rich variety of influences the spirit sheds on his people, for this purpose, and the rich variety of graces he forms in them! But does not all this bespeak the value of the soul, for

whose sanctification and happiness this glorious provision is made? Yes, surely.

5. *The nature of that happiness which God has provided for the human soul beyond the grave bespeaks its high value. It is a happiness derived from the immediate presence and enjoyment of himself; a happiness that flows from the most clear, distinguishing and enlarged views of the perfections, the character, the government, and Christ of God. There we shall no more see, as through a glass, darkly, but face to face; we shall no longer know in part, but we shall know even as also we are known.*

The precision and extent of the knowledge of the redeemed of the Lord in glory is expressed, Rev. xxii. 4. *by seeing God's face. And they shall see his face.*

It is a happiness that arises from the most perfect conformity to God, in point of moral purity. The spirits of just men are, in that state, made literally perfect; holy as God, who hath called them, is holy. That which is in part is for ever done away, and that which is perfect is now come.

This knowledge of God and conformity to him, are the sources of that enjoyment of him which consummates the happiness of the redeemed of the Lord. For there, in that world,—in that blessed state, *God himself will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, their God.* So the words lie in the original. Rev. xxi. 3. (i. e.) *God himself will be with them, exhibiting and manifesting himself unto them, as their supreme*

blessedness; in all the ways that the several powers of the soul, now arrived at the fullest maturity, both in a natural and moral view, can possibly receive or enjoy him.

This is that happiness which Christ has purchased for us; and which he has prepared and taken possession of in the name of his people. *Whither the forerunner has for us entered, even Jesus, made an high-priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedec.*

Thus it appears to be a happiness that is derived to us from God *through Christ*, and which is enjoyed in the same heaven of glory he inhabits.—One of his last petitions for his people was, *Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.* And him the Father always heareth.

Once more, it is a happiness of the same kind with that which the human nature of our Lord himself enjoys. The redeemed of the Lord become at last, *heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.* From all which it appears to be a most *perfect* and an *everlasting* happiness—a happiness equal to our highest capacity of enjoying, and that for ever.—But all this bespeaks the value of the soul, which is capable of this happiness, and for which it is prepared at so expensive a rate, by a wise and a gracious God.

6. *The reward God promises and confers upon such as win souls to Christ, bespeaks their high value.—*

They, who are brought home to God, shall be a crown of glory, and a fruitful source of consolation, in the day of Christ, to those who have been the means of their conversion. *For what, saith the apostle, is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.*

It requires no small share of wisdom and sagacity to discharge this great trust aright; for *he that winneth souls is wise.* But for their encouragement God promises, *That they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.* Many and great are the difficulties which lie in the way of the faithful minister's proper discharge of his office; but these rewards are hung up before him as a prize at the end of his course, to encourage him to diligence—to zeal, and to faithfulness in his work. And even, *though Israel be not gathered, yet shall he be glorious in the eyes of the Lord.* But surely God would not so highly encourage the *taking pains* to save souls, and thus reward them, even when they may prove unsuccessful, unless these souls were of infinite value in his sight.

7. *The joy which the conversion of a soul to God occasions in heaven, is no inconsiderable evidence of its high worth in their estimation.*

Our Lord expressly assures us, Luke xv. 7, *That there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.*—And so important is this truth, and so worthy of our attention, that it is repeated verse 10, *Like-*

wise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. And to illustrate and confirm this interesting truth, he gives us the instructive parable of the Prodigal Son, in the subsequent part of the chapter. The joy of the father on the return of his son, which concludes the parable, is beautifully illustrative of the divine and heart-felt pleasure, which the sinner's return to God through Christ spreads through the whole heavenly world—angels and spirits of just men made perfect.

On the other hand, the conversion of souls is matter of chagrin and mortification to the hosts of hell. And to this, as its true source, are we to ascribe those many and cruel persecutions, of one kind and another, that have been raised against the faithful ministers of Jesus, in the different ages of the church.—Whatever may be pretended, it is because they are the instruments, employed by God, for rescuing souls from the snare of the destroyer. And this malignity of satan against them is increased by their being successful in this great work.

Thus the joy of heaven, and the chagrin of hell, upon the sinner's conversion to God, unite in illustrating the value of the human soul.

8. *The solicitude and activity of both worlds, heaven and hell, about the soul of man, bespeaks its high worth.*

The one is engaged for its salvation, and the other, with all its accomplices, is intent upon its ruin.

Heaven is engaged for the salvation of the human soul. Agreeably hereto, God has laid a plan for our recovery, as you have already heard under a preceding particular. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each one bears his part therein; and this plan has been not only laid, but executed and revealed in the sacred oracles, and the great blessings it contains are daily applied to the souls of men, in the administration of the gospel and its ordinances.

God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

Christ, in his mediatorial character, is daily carrying on the great work of our redemption. Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. Who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

The Holy Spirit is continually employed in recovering depraved men to the divine likeness.— The angels of heaven are also employed in the same blessed work. For, *are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.*

The ministers of Christ too are engaged in the same glorious business. They are *ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

Pious friends have their hearts set on the same great end, the salvation of the souls of those who are dear to them. For this they instruct them, advise them, pray for them, and weep over them. In a word, all heaven, and all its allies, are employed in the same important work, that of saving souls.

And on the other hand, all hell is busied in destroying precious souls. Hence the devil is stiled our *adversary. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.* His business, his daily employment, is to defeat, to the utmost of his power, the gracious designs of God, upon our lost world. In this he is aided by many powerful accomplices. *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* He is also assisted by thousands of our degenerate race, who enlist under his banner, and powerfully aid him in all his infernal designs, in a variety of ways, I may not stay to enumerate.

But why all this solicitude and activity to save, or to destroy the human soul? Verily it is, because it is a prize worth the contending for; a prize worthy the struggles of heaven and hell!

And are these the souls that men in general esteem such things of nought?—About the future happiness of which they are so perfectly indifferent? What folly! What madness! And are there not some of you, my brethren, thus indifferent about your souls? Wholly unconcerned about what becomes of them after death? What sayest thou, conscience? And is this rational? Do these souls, these precious souls merit no more attention than you bestow upon them?—And tell me, ye sons of riot and profaneness, are your stolen pleasures, or your avowed debaucheries, a sufficient compensation for the loss of your rational, immortal souls?—I appeal to your understandings—I speak as to wise men, judge ye.—I leave the decision with your judgment and consciences; but remember, you are to decide for an eternity. AMEN.



S E R M O N L I X.

THE DANGER OF LOSING THE SOUL.

B Y

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MATTHEW xvi. 26.

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

WE have already considered the value of the soul, in a few particulars. Let us now proceed to consider,

II. The *nature* of the loss sustained, by those who lose their souls, in the sense of the text.

By the *loss* of the soul here, we are not to understand, its annihilation, its ceasing to exist, but its exclusion from God, and its banishment into a state of misery. The loss of which we treat, is not the loss of existence, but the loss of happiness; and which, considering the nature of the soul, is a much heavier loss than even existence itself; for it

would be better not to be, than to be in a state of insupportable and endless misery. And this loss is,

1. An *entire* loss. It is the loss of every thing that can, in the least, contribute to its comfort; Yea it is the loss of the very *capacity* of enjoying happiness in God, the only possible source of happiness to us, after this world is gone. For the person who loses his soul, in the sense of my text, loses every trace of moral goodness, and is in the same state of depravity with the devils themselves. But how affecting a case this! In this world, when a man loses his fortune, he has perhaps his honor left; if he loses both, he may still have his health left; if he loses all these, he may yet have friends; if these too are lost, he may have a God to sweeten all the sorrows of life. But to lose the soul, is to lose *all*; to have nothing left, but an existence in circumstances infinitely worse than non-existence; and what adds to the misery, is, that—

2. It is an *irreparable* loss.

There are few losses we sustain in this life, but may be repaired, in a greater or less degree. If a merchant loses by one voyage, he may gain by another; if a farmer loses by one crop, he may gain by another; if we lose one friend we may get another; and so with a variety of the other blessings of this life. But the man who loses his soul, has no possible method of repairing his loss, left. In this life, this mediatorial hour, God is upon treating

terms with us; but when life is ended, and the soul once lost, there is no method of repair; the treaty of peace is then for ever broken off, and all hope lost. From hence it follows, that it is

3. *An eternal loss.*

The misery it entails shall be commensurate with eternity itself. I am not insensible, my brethren, that there have been some few, now and then, in different ages of the church, who have taught the final restoration of the whole human race, to a state of happiness, in some period or other of their existence; and that this sentiment has been lately revived in our land.

Our time does not admit of our entering into a particular consideration of this doctrine, so unfounded in scripture, and so unfriendly in its tendency, to the interests of piety and morality. I shall only make the two following remarks upon it at present.

First—That all agree, men must be made *good*, before they can be made *happy*. The reigning power of sin, and happiness in the enjoyment of a God of unstained purity, are, at first sight, utterly incompatible with each other. But how is this goodness to be effected after death? The friends of universal salvation say, by the sinner's suffering in the future world, the punishment due to his sins in this. But this takes for granted, what is neither true, nor admitted, that punishment will cure

moral evil. It would be no difficult task to shew, that this is neither the nature, the design nor the tendency of suffering; nor is it in any instance the effect, unless rendered so by the spirit of grace.—The benefits which at any time arise from afflictions, which are readily admitted, flow wholly from this source.—They are, at best, but the means in his hand for effecting these good purposes. If punishment works this good effect, we must suppose, the devils are, at least, something better than they were near six thousand years ago, when they were cast into the prison of hell. But who supposes they are? Or if any do, what evidence have they that this is the case? You will please also to remember here, that while the sinner is suffering, in the future world, the punishment due to his sins in this, he is still sinning in that state, and, therefore, still becoming more depraved—more unlike God, as well as running deeper and deeper in debt to divine justice. He is, in every view, getting farther and farther from God and true goodness, instead of approaching nearer to them.

I have just hinted what deserves a more particular mention, and what, at the same time, merits your special notice—that the remedy God has provided and revealed in the gospel, for the cure of moral evil, and the recovery of the soul to true goodness, and the *only* remedy, is the spirit of God.

You have already heard, in a preceding discourse, that this was the interesting part he took

in the plan of our salvation, through a Mediator; and that agreeably to this, the renovation and the sanctification of the human heart, are uniformly ascribed to him, and to him *alone*, in the sacred oracles. To be regenerated is to be *born of the spirit*; and the after-progress of this good work in the soul, is *the sanctification of the spirit*, because effected by him. To ascribe, therefore, this good work to the efficacy of suffering is highly derogatory from the honor of the spirit, as the spirit of holiness; it is to ascribe that to inferior causes, that can only be effected by his almighty arm; and to give the glory to the creature, which is due alone to the Creator.

The *second* remark is, that the declarations of God, in his word, are most pointed and express against the doctrine of an universal restoration; or, in other words, they teach us, that the misery of the wicked in the future world, will be *everlasting*. Among the numerous instances of this kind I shall only mention the following.

Our Lord, in that brief but instructive account of the judgment of the great day, which you have in the 25th chapter of Matthew, from the 31st verse, introduces the judge as addressing the righteous in the following language: *Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* And the wicked he addresses in the words that follow. *Then shall he say also*

unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into EVERLASTING FIRE, prepared for the devil and his angels. And he concludes the whole account thus. And these shall go away into EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT, but the righteous into life eternal.

My brethren, it is necessary you should be informed here, that the words in this last verse, the one in the first clause, which teaches us the duration of the misery of the wicked, and that in the last clause, which teaches us the duration of the happiness of the righteous, which all agree to be eternal, are precisely the same in the original language. Can any then suppose, the Saviour, the leading trait of whose character, upon all occasions, was undissembled faithfulness, would use the same words in the same verse, in two different senses, nay, in *opposite* senses, on a subject of such infinite moment to the souls of men, as the final issue of the general judgment, without giving the least hint of it? That in the one case he should mean a limited time, and in the other an endless eternity, and yet conceal these different meanings under the veil of the most profound secrecy and silence? How could such conduct be reconciled with common honesty? But this must be the case, upon the principles of the friends of universal salvation.—For nothing can be more express and unequivocal than the declaration of our Lord, that the misery of the wicked shall be of the same duration with the happiness of the righteous, and that both the one and the other shall be EVERLASTING.

You will please to observe, further, that these two states are contrasted with each other in the text before us, and contrasted in this very point of view, as to their *duration*. This appears from the face of the words, *These shall go away into EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT, but the righteous into life eternal.*

To say the nature of the subject suggests the different senses, in which we are to understand the original word here used, though our Lord gives no hint of it, is begging the question. This is the very thing that is denied, and which has never yet been proved.

I shall only add, we are assured in 2 Thessalonians i. 9. *That the wicked shall be punished with EVERLASTING destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.* This is that which infuses the bitter ingredient, despair, into the cup of Jehovah's indignation. No hope—no hope—no hope through an endless eternity.

III. I am to consider the *danger* of thus losing the soul.

This danger is great, and arises from various sources; but all our time admits of, at present, is briefly to touch upon the few following.

I. The *state* in which we are *by nature*.

The sacred oracles uniformly represent this as a state of *spiritual death*. *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.* Every soul, by

reason of sin, is, *in a sense*, in a lost state already, that is, they have lost the favor of God; they are, *by nature*, children of wrath. They have lost the image of God. *Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.* From the former arises the necessity of being justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; and from the latter, the necessity of being renewed in the spirit of our mind. Agreeably to this, every unbelieving sinner is represented as under an *actual* sentence of condemnation to suffer the pains of eternal fire. *He that believeth not is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.*

You will, therefore, perceive, that it is only for sinners to continue in that state, unpardoned and unrenewed, and they are inevitably lost to all eternity; and the danger there is, that they may continue in this state, appears,

2. From the *many obstructions* that lie in the sinner's way, to a recovery to the favor and image of God. I cannot stay to enumerate these, much less to illustrate them at large in this place. I shall only mention the following. The blindness of the human mind—the estrangement of the heart from God; nay more, its enmity against him—the un-

faithfulness of the conscience, and the various depravity of the affections; all these are properly of an internal nature—they are obstructions that arise from ourselves. But beside these, such is the power and influence satan, the adversary of our souls, has in obstructing the sinners recovery to God, and affecting his ruin, that he is styled the *Prince of this World*. *For the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me:* And, also, *the God of this world*. *In whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.* He is, for his cunning, called *the Old Serpent*, and for his malice, *the Devil and Satan*.

Now when you consider the power, the cunning, the malice, and the industry of satan and his accomplices, that are continually employed in ruining the souls of men, the danger of their being lost is greatly heightened.

Again. This world is another fruitful source of obstructions in the sinner's way to eternal life.—The corrupt opinions of the world—its vicious examples—its smiles—its frowns—its necessary and lawful cares—its riches—its honors—its amusements, with all its various pleasures, lawful and unlawful, all, *all* contribute, by reason of our depravity, to heighten the sinner's danger of losing his soul.

3. This danger appears from the *many ways in* and *by* which the soul may be lost. The principal

of these are, ignorance of God, and of spiritual and eternal things—carnal security, and indifference respecting the salvation of our souls—a presuming on the absolute mercy of God, without proper regard had to the atonement of Christ—hypocrisy and formality in religion—the imbibing of such false principles, as are incompatible with gospel-holiness, particularly the principles of infidelity—the neglecting of God's public ordinances, which never fails, if persisted in, to issue in the ruin of the soul—procrastination, or putting off the business of our souls to some future time; this is the usual, and, alas! too frequent bane of youth; to which we may add, the many ways of open profaneness; such as drunkenness—uncleanness in all its various forms—cursing and profane swearing—lying—dishonesty in dealing with each other—sabbath-breaking—contempt of God and sacred things, with every other species of vice; all and each of these may be considered as so many different paths which lead down to the chambers of eternal death—some more secret, and some more open; and which serve to illustrate the danger of losing the soul; which danger is not a little heightened by the consideration of the immediate and fatal influence some of these things must have, from their very nature, upon the ruin of the soul.

4. This danger appears, from the *great difficulty of recovering the soul from all these evils.*

Nothing less can effect it than the almighty arm of God, and to this it is uniformly ascribed in the sacred oracles. The bent of the soul, by nature, is against its own recovery, as appears from the internal obstructions in the way to it already mentioned.

The case of the sinner may be justly compared to that of a person deprived of his reason, who refuses to use the means prescribed for his recovery, however judicious; or who counteracts them to the utmost of his power, or both. The charge of our Lord against the Jews of old, is equally just with respect to every unbelieving sinner under the gospel. *Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life.* And besides this; all earth and all hell are opposed to the sinner's recovery to God, as you have heard in its place. If ever, therefore, it be effected, it must be by the arm of the LORD GOD OF HOSTS.— And now put all these considerations together, and your selves being judges, is not the danger of losing your precious souls great?

But it is time, I should finish the subject by a few practical reflections upon what has been said. And you will easily perceive, that,

I. whether we consider the value of the soul—the nature of the ruin to which it is exposed, or the danger it is in of falling into this ruin, all conspire to teach us the evil nature of sin—that sin which exposes this precious soul to all this ruin.—

My brethren, sin is not that trifle men in general esteem it. It has lost us the divine favor, and justly exposed us to the displeasure of heaven—it has lost us the divine image, and rendered us wholly unfit for the enjoyment of the God of holiness—it is the procuring cause of all the numerous and complicated evils of this life.—*For as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*

“If every individual of our race,” says a pious divine, “that has ever existed from Adam down to our day, were collected into one mighty heap, and an inquest held upon them, sin would be found to be the murderer.” But this is not all, for we are assured that those who persist in the ways of sin, *shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*—Must it not then be an evil and a bitter thing to sin against the Lord? Would to God that I could impress each one of you, and my own soul with yours, with a proper sense of the evil and destructive nature thereof, that we might be hereby excited to hate it in a suitable manner, to turn from it to God through his Son Jesus Christ, and to maintain a careful and constant guard against it.

2. How indebted are we to rich grace for a Saviour from the ruin, which the loss of these precious souls involves?—a ruin of which we are in so much danger. God might have passed by our race

as he passed by the fallen angels, and have left us to perish in our unnatural rebellion against him, as he left them. But O! the riches of redeeming love! Having laid his plan in the eternal councils of peace, he was pleased to execute it in the fulness of time, by *sending his Son* into our world, *made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of children.* Herein, indeed, is love, *not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* And let Gethsemane tell—let the scenes of infamy and insult, through which the Saviour passed, from thence to mount Calvary, tell—and let Calvary itself, and the cross tell what the price of our redemption cost the Son of God. Here is love that many waters could not quench! Love that all the billows of Jehovah's wrath could not drown! Love stronger than death!—My brethren, let this love of God and his Son Christ, constrain you to estimate your souls in a proper manner, and flee from the wrath to come, upon the plan of the gospel.

3. This subject teaches us the precious nature of the ordinances of the gospel. I particularly mean here the institutions of God's public worship on the sabbath, the word and sacrament.—These are the means he has instituted and ordained for the recovery of lost souls to the divine favor, and their restoration to his holy image. *For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom*

knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe. And you elsewhere read, that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. The great truths taught in the faithful preaching of the word, and in the administration of the gospel-sacraments, are the means the holy spirit uses for these gracious purposes; they are the means by which he effects and promotes that change in the heart and life, in which gospel-holiness consist; and the duties there taught are the guide of the Christian's life.

I beseech you, therefore, my brethren, that you estimate these ordinances of God—these institutions of mercy, in a suitable manner; adore God for them—rejoice in them, as your inestimable privilege—make conscience of attending upon them from sabbath to sabbath; but above all, see that you improve them for the great purposes of your personal purity, your comfort in the ways of God, and for holding a delightful intercourse with the Father of your Spirits while here upon earth, that you may be prepared for dwelling with him in glory.

4. We are taught by this subject the solemn nature of the charge committed to those who have the care of souls.—This is the charge of gospel-ministers. Hence that apostolic injunction; *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account; that they may do it with joy, and not with*

grief, for that is unprofitable for you. The value of the souls committed to their care, shews the importance of the charge. They are of more worth than a world. *For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

It farther appears from the high danger finners are in of losing these souls, as already illustrated, and from the awful nature of the loss when sustained. All these unite in shewing the necessity of watchfulness, diligence and faithfulness in the ministers of Jesus Christ. I beseech you then, my brethren, let us have your pity and your prayers, your countenance and your assistance in the discharge of our great trust. *Be ye helpers together by prayer for us.*

Parents also have a solemn charge in the souls of their children, and masters and mistresses in the souls of their servants. Be entreated then to instruct them with care—to watch over them—to pray for them and with them—and to set an example of piety and good morals before them.

I only add once more.

5. The important truths you have heard, loudly call upon finners to awake out of their security—to shake off their sloth—to seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near. Think, O think of the numerous and pro-

bable ways by which men may lose their precious souls, and by which they are daily losing them, and that for ever!—And is there no danger of your losing your souls, in some one or other of these ways? Pause a moment upon this important question! It is too important to be trifled with, and too interesting to be delayed! Your souls—your precious souls are at stake!

These truths also call upon profane sinners of every class and description to break off their sins by repentance, and turn unto the living God, through his Son Jesus Christ. They address you, O sinners! in the following authoritative, yet tender language of inspiration. *Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.—How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning? and fools hate knowledge. Turn ye at my reproof; behold I will pour out my spirit unto you—I will make known my words unto you. As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel!*

Do not wonder that the ministers of Jesus address you with solemnity and tenderness—that they mingle tears with their entreaties, when beseeching sinners to have mercy upon their precious souls. Indifference in such a case would be the height of absurdity in us, and the greatest cruel-

ty to you. *Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. And may this be the effect of the present address, through the riches of free grace in Christ our Lord. Amen and Amen.*



The first of the three
is the one which is
the most common
and the most useful
in the study of
the history of the
human mind.

The second is the one
which is the most
difficult to understand
and the most
important in the
study of the
history of the
human mind.

The third is the one
which is the most
interesting and the
most important in
the study of the
history of the
human mind.

The fourth is the one
which is the most
important in the
study of the
history of the
human mind.

The fifth is the one
which is the most
important in the
study of the
history of the
human mind.

S E R M O N LX.*

SANCTUARY BLESSINGS.

B Y

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EXODUS XX. 24.

*In all places where I record my name, I will come unto
thee and bless thee.*

A SAVIOUR was early revealed. Immediately after the fall the promise was given to our first parents, in a short, but very comprehensive sentence against the serpent. *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* This was afterwards gradually unfolded through all the preparatory discoveries of succeeding ages; and its important meaning illustrated by many additional declarations, which all pointed to the blessed Redeemer.

* This Sermon was preached, July 4, 1790, in the *new, or middle Dutch Church*, which had been ruined during the war, and having been repaired, was that day dedicated anew to the service of God.

A character so singular and eminent, ought to be fully ascertained by every mark of distinction. His church must know at his coming, for what end he appeared, and be able to discriminate him from all others. To answer this purpose, the wisdom of God is conspicuous, in separating Israel as a particular nation, to preserve the truths of revelation, and be the peculiar people from whom the Saviour, as to the flesh, was to spring, *who is God over all, blessed for ever more.*

But to set apart a nation, in such a manner as to prevent a mixture with the rest of mankind, and answer the great designs respecting the Messiah, it was necessary a government should be constituted of a very singular kind: a government, which would bind the conscience in religion, as well as the conduct in civil affairs: A government, in which the church and state would be perfectly incorporated, and the members of both societies become united under the same code of laws. This could only be done by a *theocracy*. No human constitution could possibly effect it.—The sacred rights of conscience can never be delegated by any people to their rulers; nor can the magistrate assume the prerogative of enforcing uniformity in doctrines or worship, without injustice and tyranny.

Fifty days after the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt, they arrived at Mount Sinai. There the covenant was formally ratified, between

God and them ; and their government completely organized. On that occasion, an august display of the divine presence was made, superior to any that was ever before exhibited on earth, or will probably be again, until the Lord shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the arch-angel, and with the trump of God. *There were thunderings and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, and Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke ; because the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.*

From the midst of this tremendous scene, the sum of the moral law was aloud proclaimed to Israel. The remaining parts of the legislation, at the express request of the people, were communicated to Moses first, and, by him, brought down to them. The words of the text, which follow shortly after the ten commandments, are a promise annexed to the law, which respected the altar. *An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, thy sheep and thine oxen : In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee and bless thee.* A gracious promise ! calculated to direct the Israelites to an acceptable service, and encourage them to persevere in their faith and worship : but a promise which refers to the church under the New-Testament dispensation, as much as to that under the old.—

There is but one Saviour, and one covenant of grace, whereby finners can obtain eternal life.— There is also but one church, founded on that covenant, however various it may have been in its outward forms. Whatever was, therefore, an essential promise of that covenant to Israel, is equally so to us; and, in this extent, I shall now consider the text.

There is, perhaps, no passage in the sacred oracles more applicable to our present situation, or better suited to excite in your minds proper exercises upon this solemn occasion. *In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee and bless thee.* Words, replete with instruction and comfort! Words, which clearly determine what constitutes a true church, and what blessings we may hope to obtain in the sanctuary! Confident as I am of your usual attention, I need not fear trespassing upon your patience, while I discuss a subject, in which you are deeply interested, and for meditating upon which, with eager expectations, you are now expressly come. The Lord bear witness to his own word, and make it the first fruits of a plentiful harvest, in this house! To understand the text, it will be necessary to know,

I. What is meant by *recording the name of the Lord in any place.* And then,

II. The import of the promise, *I will come unto thee and bless thee.* Both these, in a humble de-

pendence upon divine aid, I purpose to explain, and apply.

First—I must shew you what is meant by the Lord's recording his name in any place. God has not left himself without a witness. *The invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.* The brightest evidence of his existence and attributes, are engraven on every object around us. *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth forth his handywork.* But something particular is designed in the text. The *name* of the Lord is mentioned with singular emphasis; and some places are distinguished from others, by their relation to that name. Let us investigate both these.

I. With respect to the *former*; by the NAME OF THE LORD is often understood, God himself, or the display of his infinite perfections in those works, whereby he makes his being and nature known.—Thus Psalm xx. 1. *The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble, the name of the God of Jacob defend thee.* So Psalms xxix. 2. xxxiv. 3.—1 Tim. vi. 1. And thus also in the third precept of the decalogue:—*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.* But the NAME of the Lord, when used in a particular reference to the covenant of grace, always respects God considered as a REDEEMER; and expresses his divine perfections, as they are gloriously displayed in the salvation of sinners. This

is ascertained from that memorable passage in the 34th chapter of Exodus, where the Lord is said to have proclaimed his name to Moses. *And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there and proclaimed the NAME OF THE LORD; and the Lord passed by before him and proclaimed, the LORD, the LORD God merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgressions, and sins, and will by no means clear the guilty.*

This was the blessed name implied in the first promise of a Saviour in paradise, and was the only foundation on which the worship of sinners could be built. In the earliest ages of the world it was thus understood, *Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.* As soon as their numbers were sufficiently increased, they began, as a church, in a public manner, to worship the Lord, AS A GOD OF SALVATION, through the promised Messiah.

The knowledge and profession of this sacred name continued in the world, until infidelity and wickedness had gradually effaced the truths of revelation, and threatened, at last, wholly to extirpate the worship of God. Noah, who was a preacher, and heir of the righteousness which is by faith, preserved the treasure. He conveyed it to his posterity, who survived the flood; and revealed religion was universally acknowledged, until ignorance and enmity a second time made a formidable opposition, and mankind began again to degenerate into idolatry and profaneness.

The calling of Abraham, and entailing the promise upon his family, secured the doctrines of grace, and perpetuated the true worship of God. To that patriarch the Lord confirmed his name.—

Fear not Abram, I am thy shield and exceeding great reward—I am GOD ALMIGHTY—a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. Upon the separation of A-

braham to a special interest in the promise, two great privileges were granted to him. The first was, that, according to the flesh, he should be the father of the Messiah, who was the life of the covenant, the origin and cause of all the blessings contained therein. The second was, that the faith of Abraham, whereby he became personally interested in the covenant, should be a pattern of the faith of the church in all generations; so that none should ever be real members, or partake of its blessings, but by the same faith which Abraham exercised. It is upon account of this, that *he is the father of all them that believe, and the heir of the world.* It is in this respect that, in the covenant made with him, the basis of the church, for all future ages, was fixed. Wherever that covenant is established, and with whomsoever it is confirmed, there is a church, and to them all its essential privileges appertain.

It was the distinguished happiness of Israel to enjoy these privileges. Notwithstanding the frequent instances of depravity in that nation, there were always some, and often many among them,

who possessed the faith of their father Abraham, and inherited the blessings of the covenant. Previous to the departure of the people from Egypt, the NAME OF THE LORD was expressly made known and explained, as the foundation of the whole Mo-
saic economy. *And Moses said unto God, behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, the God of your fathers hath sent me unto you, and they shall say unto me, what is his name? What shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: And he said, thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel; I AM hath sent me unto you. And God said, moreover, unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, the Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob hath sent me unto you: this is MY NAME for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.* Of this Israel was again admonished, Exodus xxiii. 20, 21—*with which compare 2 Cor. iv. 6.* It was also enjoined upon the high-priests continually to *put that name*, by their very forms of blessing, upon the people—Numb. vi. 27.

There is no necessity of detaining you with any observations upon the particular titles, by which it hath pleased God to distinguish himself in the Old or New Testament. The word JEHOVAH is the most expressive, and is absolutely incommunicable. It denotes his essential and independent being, and has an immediate relation to the covenant of grace. It points, with all the others, to the

same important centre, and designates the Supreme as a *reconciled God in the Mediator*. This is the sum and scope of divine revelation. *This is his name, and this is his memorial*. Believers, under the old dispensation, considered it in that light. When they mentioned the *name of the Lord*, as a plea, or an invocation in prayer, they comprised, what we now intend, by naming the Redeemer, or calling upon God, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. All, therefore, that is implied in the redemption of sinners, and which is, perhaps, expressed in fewest words, by saying with the Psalmist—Psalm lxxviii. 19. that God is THE GOD OF OUR SALVATION, is meant in the text. This is the name here designed—a name much forgotten, or corrupted among other nations, but manifested to Israel as the great object of their faith and worship, and committed to them as a deposit of infinite value.

2. Let us now see in what respects that name may be said to BE RECORDED in any place.

The words might be rendered, *in all places where I shall fix the memory of my name*: or, *in all places where I shall make my name to be invoked*. The Chaldaic paraphrase has it, *in every place where I shall make my majesty to dwell*. The phrase, agreeably to either of these translations, evidently refers to the public worship of God, and has respect both to the *place* when, and the *manner* in which it was to be celebrated. The blessing was not in-

discriminately located in every spot where any of the tribes might determine to fix a sanctuary; nor did God promise to be propitious to every kind of worship they might choose to celebrate, but only to such place, as he should designate, and such worship as should be performed according to his appointment.

It is well known, that the tabernacle was the *place* of public worship, which God, exclusively of all others, determined for the Israelites, while they were in the wilderness. After they had possession of the promised land, the ark of the covenant was lodged at Shiloh, and there, for a long while, the people celebrated divine service. When the temple was finished, Jerusalem was fixed upon as the permanent seat. To that place the tribes were obliged to go up, and thrice every year all the males were there to appear before the Lord. After the captivity in Babylon, the privileges of the sanctuary were again restored. A second temple was built by Zerubbabel, and Israel continued to worship at Jerusalem until the Messiah came.

If you now enquire, *how* the name of the Lord was RECORDED in all these places, and by what means it might be said that he made himself to be there remembered as the God of Salvation? We refer you, for a *general* answer, to the genius and scope of the Mosaic institution. The covenant of Sinai, that whole dispensation, was not only subordinate to the covenant of grace, but it had an im-

mediate respect to the Messiah, and was subservient to his coming. The types and ceremonies—the religious rites, and all the various parts of their worship, were instituted of God himself, for the express purpose of confirming the faith of his church, and they all pointed to the blessed Jesus, as the end of the law. By these, therefore, the name of the Lord was recorded in Israel, and the worship, performed in the sanctuary, served to perpetuate the memory of Jehovah as the God of Salvation.

But this great end was more *especially* attained by the SACRIFICES and burnt-offerings, which formed an essential part of the daily worship in Israel. Abstractly considered, and without any reference to the divine appointment, there is, indeed, nothing instructive, or even rational, in spilling the blood of a beast, or offering either the vegetable or animal creation as a part of religious service.—It is easy for infidels, upon the subject, to shew their enmity against revealed religion by arguing: “The extreme folly of supposing God should ever
“be pleased with the mere waste of his own pro-
“ductions; or, in the case of animal sacrifice, in
“particular, should consider as an act of accepta-
“ble religion, the destruction of a life, of which
“he had so exquisitely provided for the continu-
“ance. That, while the very idea of a divine Be-
“ing implies in it such a superior excellence of na-
“ture, as to be wholly out of the reach of our good

“ offices, the general notion of sacrificing is altogether as extraordinary as it appears to have been universal in the world.” But however strange and improper sacrifices may appear to superficial observers; yet, when they are considered as commanded of God, and calculated to represent and confirm the great benefits he designed to confer upon sinners, through the Saviour, they must be acknowledged to be a rational and divine service. They cannot, it is true, be ingrafted by the religion of nature into the worship of sinless creatures. Had man not fallen, a victim had never bled. The idea of an expiation, where there is no guilt, is incompatible. But the religion of sinners is founded upon the relation they sustain to God as their Redeemer. They cannot approach him without a mediator and the intervention of an atonement. A sacrifice, therefore, either in the type or the archetype, is absolutely essential in their worship. It was a consciousness of guilt which prompted the desire of satisfying divine justice by some offering, or rather a tradition respecting the Saviour, which was the source of sacrifices among the heathen nations, and the practice cannot be accounted for upon any other principle. But in Israel, where the truths of revelation were preserved, and sacrifices had the sanction of a new and immediate appointment, they constituted a noble and instructive part of divine worship. Believers were then looking for the appearance of the promised seed, who was not yet come. What could be bet-

ter calculated to assist their faith—to establish their hope, and instruct them in the method of salvation, than to be commanded of God to substitute a bloody offering in their own stead, and thus transfer the legal guilt and punishment upon a sacrifice? In this act of worship, the bleeding lamb and smoking altar directed them to the promised surety, the precious Lamb of God, who, by his sufferings and death, was fully to atone for his people, and, by one perfect sacrifice, became the author of salvation unto all that obey him. Thus, by the *manner* in which the solemn worship was celebrated in those places, the Lord recorded his name in Israel, as a God of Salvation. In this way the saints of the Old Testament-dispensation had their graces drawn into exercise. They lived by faith; and the apostle, in his epistle to the Hebrews, assures us, that they also *died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, they were persuaded of them, and embraced them.*

When the Messiah came, a new dispensation commenced. The object for setting apart a distinct nation, under a theocracy, was fully obtained. The necessity of a singular government no longer existed. The separating wall was consequently broken down, and the peculiarities of the Mosaic worship and polity were totally abrogated. Now there is no distinction of nations, nor is there any *place* particularly assigned by divine appointment for public worship. *The hour cometh, said*

our Lord to the woman of Samaria, *when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father; the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him.* Wherever the people of God unite in spiritual worship, the blessing is secured. *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I, in the midst of them.* A gracious word! which reaches to every place where his children may be engaged in the duties of religion; and extends the text, in its fullest import, to the churches under the New Testament dispensation, as much as formerly, to the tabernacle or temple, to Shiloh or Jerusalem.

But what constitutes a church within the meaning of the text? The mere assumption of the title without possessing the essentials requisite to give existence to a true church, will surely not suffice. It is possible to have the form of godliness, and yet to deny the power thereof. It is possible to retain the name, and yet to depart even from the form, so far, that little or nothing of the doctrine or worship peculiar to Christianity is found.— This renders it necessary to enquire, what it is *records* the name of the Lord in any place of worship under the New Testament, and by what unerring characteristic such a place may be distinguished from all others? Let it suffice upon this important and extensive enquiry, in order to reduce it to the limits of the present hour, to reply, *first*, in a

negative view; that the name of the Lord, under the present economy is *not* recorded—by types and shadows, the sacrifices and legal ordinances which formerly constituted a proper and acceptable service. *The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* A free, a filial, and a spiritual worship is most suitable to the privilege and dignity of the New Testament-church. Again, it is not any exclusive national establishment, or the partial favor of civil rulers, that can constitute a church. Denominations, in principle and worship very contrary to each other, have been adopted in different nations, without obtaining thereby the least weight in the scale of truth or becoming the church of Christ because they were the church of the magistrate. An union between the church and state, however artfully contrived to suit the genius of civil government, or ingeniously defended to apologize for usurped privileges, is, under the present dispensation, absurd and impossible—it is of human invention, and has often prostituted the most sacred things, by making them subservient to mere political views, to avarice, or the lust of domination. Again, it is not the magnificence of a building, the shew of wealth, or any ostentatious ceremonies, which can record the name of the Lord among a people. The house is not the church, and parade is not worship. These may all originate from improper principles, and be monuments of pride and superstition, instead of an acceptable service in spirit

and in truth. Lastly, it is not a worship dictated solely by the religion of nature, or the legal spirit of the covenant of works, without an immediate and particular regard to the blessed Mediator, that can possibly commemorate the God of Salvation. Wherever the distinguishing truths of the gospel are omitted, or slightly passed over, and social duties, however important and necessary, are only inculcated to the neglect of what we owe to God, and to the Saviour; there the most essential and constituent parts of a New Testament-church are wanting; and such places of worship are not within the promise of the text. The name of the Lord is not recorded there.

But, in a positive view, if you enquire in what it consists, or where it may be said the sacred name, under the New Testament, is recorded? We reply—it is there where the doctrines of grace, and what essentially relates to the salvation of sinners, through the imputed righteousness of the precious Saviour, are firmly believed and openly professed. It is there where these truths are plainly and boldly preached by the ministers of the gospel, and divine worship is conducted upon evangelical principles. A crucified Jesus, and eternal life in him, constitute the glad tidings of great joy. To be renewed by the Holy Spirit, to repent of sin, and believe in the Son of God, are the great requisitions and promises of the gospel: and self-denial, humility and holiness in all its branches,

are the fruits of that faith which works by love, and purifies the heart. Where these truths are faithfully taught, and where these things are experienced and practised, there is a church. There the name of the Lord, as a God of Salvation, is recorded. A church thus constituted, although attended by the poor, although assembled in a building destitute of colonnades, engravings and ornaments, is more glorious, more acceptable in the sight of God, than the most stately temple, and illustrious audience, where these doctrines are not honored. To this permit me to add, (and the bare mention of them must suffice) the due administration of the sacraments; and, an impartial use of the keys of discipline in excluding unworthy members. Wherever all these are found, whether in a thronged city, or a waste forest, amongst the highest, or the lowest ranks in society, there God will meet with his humble supplicants, and make them joyful in his house of prayer. To such worshippers the promise in the text is made, and to all such places he will come and bless his people.

Before we proceed to consider the precious promise, it deserves our notice, upon this first part of the subject, that while the things we have been speaking of are to be viewed as matters of duty, with respect to us, they are primarily to be considered as originating wholly from God, and must be received as his gift. I record my name, faith the

Lord—And it is so—it is of his sovereign goodwill that a Saviour is provided for fallen men and not for fallen angels. It is of the Lord that there is a church preserved on earth, notwithstanding all the opposition of the gates of hell; and it must be ascribed to his grace, that in any place, and among any people, his truths are faithfully preached, and spiritual worship is celebrated. I might add, it is of him that a people find a pure desire to build a house for his service; and it is he, in his good providence, who puts it in the power of their hands to finish the work. *Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.* But let us attend to the promise, and consider,

II. The import of these words, *I will come unto thee, and bless thee.*

The blessing of the Lord is always upon his people in every place. He hears their prayers in secret, and in their families. He has never said to the seed of Jacob, *seek ye me in vain.* But to public worship peculiar mercies are annexed. *He loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. For the Lord hath chosen Zion—he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever—here will I dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.* The ordinances of his house are positive institutions for promoting his glory in the world. These he has appointed as the ordi-

nary means for converting sinners, and edifying his faints; and these, in an especial manner, he will own and bless.

1. I WILL COME—this is the promise: *I will come where I record my name.* God is never absent—he compasseth our path and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways. He is not far from every one of us, for in him we live, and move, and have our being. He is no local deity, like those of the idolatrous heathen. He is confined to no spot—the heaven is his throne, and the earth is his footstool. All nature is his temple—all space his abode—every living thing is the workmanship of his hand, and his providential care and tender mercies extend over all his creatures. But he is near to his people in a sense more exalted, than the ordinary cares of Providence imply. He is their reconciled God and Father; they are his chosen whom he loves—his treasure—his jewels; a people formed for himself, to shew forth his glory. He is said, therefore, in the style of scripture, to come to his church, because he *there* gives the most distinguishing proofs of his gracious presence, and exhibits the most unequivocal evidences of his love and divine approbation. Remarkable to this purpose are the promises with respect both to the tabernacle and the temple. In relation to the former, see Exodus xxix. 43, 44, 45. *And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory. I will sanctify the tabernacle of the*

congregation and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office. And I will dwell amongst the children of Israel, and will be their God. In regard to the latter, 2 Chron. vii. 12--15, 16. *And the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice. Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attentive unto the prayer that is made in this place. For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever, and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.*

A cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night were tokens of the divine protection to the whole camp of Israel. These directed the people in the wilderness where to bend their course, and when to pitch their tents. But the ark of the covenant, with the mercy-seat between the cherubims, were the AUGUST SYMBOLS of the more immediate presence of God in the sanctuary. Under the New Testament, agreeably to the present spiritual economy, the divine presence is not accompanied with such visible emblems; but it is not the less real, efficacious, and comfortable. In both dispensations the name of the city remains JEHOVAH SHAMMAH, *the Lord is there.* The blessed Redeemer, since his resurrection and triumphant ascension, is no more on earth, with respect to his human nature, but with respect to his Godhead, majesty, grace and spirit, he is at no time absent from us. At his departure

he said—*lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*—And it is even so. The amen—the faithful and true witness still holds the stars of his church in his right hand, and *walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks*. The springs of Zion are all in him; and glorious things for ever continue to be spoken of the city of God—the Highest himself shall establish her, and God is known in her palaces for a refuge. All this is implied in the text before us, and expressed in one general term—I WILL BLESS THEE. Let us examine this second part of the promise.

2. The blessing here intended cannot refer to sensual enjoyments, nor mean the riches, pleasures and comforts of this life. Our Emmanuel holds out no Mahometan paradise to his followers, nor is his kingdom of this world. The church of God is formed on nobler principles, and for higher purposes—Blessings of a superior nature are in store for her. *The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*. Great peace have all they who love his law; but they may, nevertheless, suffer great tribulation, and be exposed to many afflictions here.—Under the theocracy, civil and domestic mercies were promised, but these were only the appendages of the covenant of grace suited to that dispensation, and constituted no part of its essential benefits. The promise in the text refers principally to SANCTUARY BLESSINGS. Those great and good things be-

fore-mentioned, for the obtaining of which the ordinances of the sanctuary were especially instituted.

That the Lord conferred these blessings upon his church, under the Old Testament, is evident from his word. Notwithstanding the provocations of Israel, and the severe judgments which their sins very frequently brought upon them; yet he remembered his covenant, and his presence was not wholly removed. The oracles of truth were preserved inviolate, and spiritual Israel, the elect people of God in each succeeding generation, were converted, comforted, and finally saved. When the old dispensation had done its work, it resigned over to the new, the memory of the sacred name, and a glorious ERA commenced. Zion rejoiced in her sudden prosperity, and became invested with extensive blessings. What these blessings are, as they refer to us, is of more importance now to ascertain.

The apostle sums up the whole, in saying to the Ephesians—*He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.* And with respect to sanctuary privileges, he asserts the superior excellency of the New Testament above the Old, to the Corinthians—*If the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. The veil is done away in Christ, and we all, with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord; are changed into the same*

image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord. The borders of Zion are now enlarged—the church is no longer as a child under age, but enjoys a glorious liberty—access is opened *into the holiest by the blood of Jesus—by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us.* Believers obtain the nearest approach to heaven, which, on this side of the world of spirits, will, or can be granted.—The New Testament is the last and highest economy of grace, and its holy institutions are amply fitted to prepare the saints for the immediate vision and fruition of God in glory.

But it is necessary to descend to particulars, and enquire, with respect to gospel-churches, “when
“the Lord may be said to bless his people where
“his name is recorded,” agreeably to the import of the text? Without enumerating all the mercies comprised in the promise, let it suffice to answer:

I. The Lord blesses his churches, when he gives them a pure and faithful MINISTRY—when he raises up men, who have experienced the power of the truth upon their own hearts; who believe what they preach, and shudder at making the pulpit the theatre of their own praise, or private interest.—He sends a blessing when he sends laborers into his harvest, who, unbiaſſed by worldly fears and hopes, continue resolute in every part of duty, inflexibly honest, and exemplary in their conversation. Such men were promised: *I will give you pastors according to my heart, which shall feed you with knowledge*

and understanding. Thine eyes shall see thy teachers. Such men are blessings to the churches. By taking heed to themselves, and all the flock, they hold forth the word of life, with the prospect of success, and will have cause to *rejoice in the day of Christ, that they have not run in vain, neither labored in vain.* It is by the ministry of men, it pleases God to call sinners to his communion, and accomplish his designs of love. He has committed the treasure of the gospel into earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may appear to be from him. The gifts, therefore, for the ministry, which the exalted Saviour bestowed from his throne, are represented by the apostle, as a principle blessing conferred upon the church. *When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.* He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

2. The Lord blesses his church when, in his good providence, he preserves his people together in mutual PEACE, and prevents confusion, animosities and schisms. *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity; it is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments. As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for ever more.*

3. But especially he blesses his people in the place where he records his name, when he bestows that blessing of all blessings, the HOLY SPIRIT.—*When he pours water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. Then the light of Zion breaks forth as the morning, and her health springs forth speedily. The wilderness is glad; the desert rejoices, and blossoms as the rose.* This brings the truth with power to the consciences of sinners—alarms the careless and profane, and directs them, agreeably to the written word, to fly for refuge to the hope set before them. This establishes his own people in their most holy faith—calls forth their graces into exercise, and enables them to adorn the doctrines they profess, by a holy life and conversation. He comes with a blessing, when *he breathes upon the slain, that they may live*; when he makes his house a Bethel, administers consolation to his mourners, and grants them *fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*. These, and what is inseparably connected with these, constitute the principal blessings conferred in the sanctuary. Thus his children, who are born in Zion, are fed by the ordinances, as in green pastures. Thus they are enabled to go from strength to strength, until they shall appear without spot or wrinkle, prepared to join the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven. But I must not omit.

4. The PROTECTION AND DEFENCE of the Most High, whereby he preserves his churches in the

enjoyment of their privileges, and continues his blessing from the fathers to the children. *The Lord will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory shall be a defence.—This shall be written for the generation to come, and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.* While his name continues to be faithfully recorded, his churches may expect the continuation of the blessing. But if they become luke-warm, if they depart from the faith, or degenerate into immoral practices, they have reason to fear a suspension, if not a total loss of the promised mercies: And wo to a people when God departs from them! The message brought by Azariah the son of Obed, is replete with instruction, and very alarming. *Hear ye me Aza, and all Judah and Benjamin; the Lord is with you while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if you forsake him, he will forsake you.* Agreeably to this rule, God addressed the people, Jer. vii. 12. *Go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at first, and see what I did to it, for the wickedness of my people Israel.* Those, therefore, who enjoy the gospel, must not be high minded but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, but broke them off because of unbelief, let Gentile sinners take heed, lest he also spare not them.—

What was addressed to the church of Ephesus, Rev. ii. 5—7. may be considered as spoked to all in a similar situation: *Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.* HE THAT HATH AN EAR, LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAITH UNTO THE CHURCHES.

After explaining the subject, it only remains, before I proceed to the application, that I detain you a few moments, in shewing the actual accomplishment of the promise in the text. That it was verified under the Old Testament, we have sufficiently seen; and the outlines of its fulfilment under the new, are easily drawn.

At the beginning of the dispensation, on the day of Pentecost, the name of the Lord was gloriously recorded. He came agreeably to his promise, and dispensed his blessing. Three thousand were converted under one sermon; and these were only the first fruits of a great and plentiful harvest. Throughout the whole primitive gospel-ministry, the most evident tokens of the divine presence, and a concurring blessing, were uniformly exhibited. God was with his servants, and bore them witness with divers signs and wonders, and there were added to the church daily, such as should be saved.

In every succeeding age the great Jehovah has remembered his inheritance. The blessing has

been more copious at one time than another, but the promise has never totally failed. Under the persecutions of Imperial Rome, the Lord did not withdraw from his afflicted Zion. He gave his people strength equal to their day. He made the blood of the martyrs to prove a seed to the church; and caused the gospel finally to triumph, against all the powerful efforts of Pagan superstition and cruelty.

During the long and dark period of anti-christian tyranny, when a train of fiery trials attended the faithful followers of the Redeemer, the presence of the Lord was abundantly experienced, and the promise sweetly accomplished. His little flock, hemmed in on every side by devouring wolves, obtained, in their pious assemblies, such confirmations of their faith, and such exalted consolations and encouragements, as rendered the church of Christ, even while groaning under the fiercest hatred of the church of Rome, a witness for the truth expressed in the text.

Since the happy reformation, in different nations where his name has been recorded, the Lord has often manifested his glory and majesty, by astonishing displays of his presence and power in the sanctuary. And where the rich out-pourings of his spirit have been suspended, he has still continued, by his more ordinary blessings, to be as the dew unto Israel. At all times he has fulfilled his gracious promise, and made himself known in

Zion, as a God of Salvation. In this testimony, his people on every coast, and in every age, unite. This also we ourselves can witness this day. With us his name is recorded within these walls—he has formerly afforded us his presence. Here, in this very place, as well as in our other sanctuaries, he has often come and dispensed his blessing.

I have shewn you what we are to understand by the *name* of the Lord, and what is implied in his *recording* that name in any place. I have also pointed out the peculiar blessings promised to the sanctuary, and the faithfulness of God in accomplishing his word. Suffer me now to apply the subject. And,

First, We learn, “that the Son of God, from
 “the beginning to the end of the world, gathers,
 “defends, and preserves to himself, by his spirit and
 “word, out of the whole human race, A CHURCH,
 “chosen to everlasting life, and agreeing in true
 “faith.”* This church is but one, considered in its relation to the exalted Redeemer, the Head and King of Zion. It consists of many members. Millions are already in heaven, and constitute that part which may be called the church-triumphant. Millions are now on earth, who compose the church-militant. And millions more will yet be gathered, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

Interesting observations might be deduced from this subject, respecting the love of God towards his

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* Heidelb. Catech. sect. xxi.

people—the safety of Zion—the communion of saints, and the discipline and government of the church. It might be proper, also, to attend to the marks of a true church—the distinguishing characteristic of a member, and the peculiar obligation upon all who enjoy the privileges of the sanctuary to preserve them pure, and to be found faithful.—But it is impossible at present to enter upon these. I can only remind you, that you have seen it is not a mere form of words, or any ceremonies in the visible church that can dedicate a temple to God, or render any building a consecrated sanctuary. Nothing less than recording the name of the Lord, by sound, evangelical doctrine, and worshipping in spirit and in truth, can insure the blessing.

Secondly, We learn, there is forgiveness with our God, that he may be feared; and thus a foundation laid for TRUE AND SPIRITUAL WORSHIP. The great object of religious adoration is clearly revealed, and a glorious way opened for our return to him. All the angels in heaven worship God, and they cease not day nor night in ascribing the homage, praise and thanksgiving, which are due to his holy name. Should we not, then, esteem it an unspeakable blessing and honor to be permitted to join in such exalted service? Ought we not to rejoice in liberty of access to the Father of our Spirits, who, in sovereign mercy, has made himself known as the God of Salvation? It is in this faith, and with views and exercises founded upon these

principles, that we adored the great Jehovah in those prayers, with which divine service was just now opened in this house; and with this worship, in spirit and in truth, HIS NAME IS NOW RECORDED in this place.

Thirdly, We see, that the doctrines of the gospel, like their divine Author, are the same yesterday, to day, and for ever. Larger measures of knowledge, and of the Spirit, may have been granted under one dispensation than another, but the nature and properties of saving-faith are ever the same. The great Redeemer has always been precious to his people; and, in their Emmanuel, all the saints have ever found both *righteousness and strength*. Know then, my brethren, the God of your Salvation; and remember, that the PERFECT RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST is the sole meritorious cause of the justification of a sinner, and the basis on which every blessing in the SANCTUARY, as well as all your hopes for eternal life, are founded.— This righteousness the Son of God has wrought out, by his active and passive obedience, for all his people: This they receive by faith; and this the Father imputes to them, as he imputed to Christ their sins. *He who knew no sin*, says the apostle, 2 Cor. v. 21. *was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*. But how was Christ made sin for us? Not surely by partaking in our depravity, nor having any sin inherent in himself; but, by having our sins imputed to him, that

he, as a sin-offering and sacrifice, might atone for them. In like manner we are made righteous in him, not by any inherent righteousness in ourselves, but by having his righteousness imputed to us. The name by which he was known, under the Old Testament-dispensation as well as the New, is the *Lord our righteousness*. Jer. xxiii. 6. But in what way can the righteousness of Christ become ours? It must be so inherently or imputatively—There is no other alternative. But, is it inherently ours? Certainly no, for it is expressly opposed to all inherent righteousness in us, Phil. iii. 6. Nor can *that* be inherent in us, *which* was performed by Christ. It is, therefore, ours by imputation. Wherefore God is said to *IMPUTE righteousness without works*. *This is that righteousness of God which is manifested without the law, being witnessed by the law and the prophets. This is the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe.* By faith we are justified, in as much as we receive the offered salvation by the hand of faith. *Through* faith we are saved, as there is no other way of appropriating to ourselves the righteousness of the surety, than by believing in him. But it is not *for* faith, nor any other work performed by us, or even graces wrought within us, that we obtain pardon for sin, and a right to eternal life. In the Redeemer alone God is well-pleased, and for his sake alone is become the God and Father of all who are united to his Son. Faith is his gift, and every grace is bestowed by him.—

This insures his glory in our justification, and is the only productive principle of sanctification in heart and life—of that inherent holiness which constitutes moral rectitude, and without which no man can see God. These are the doctrines we profess and believe. “ We believe the Holy Ghost
“ kindleth in our hearts an upright faith, which
“ embraces Jesus Christ with all his merits, ap-
“ propriates him, and seeks nothing more besides
“ him. Therefore, we justly say with Paul, *that*
“ *we are justified by faith alone; or, by faith without*
“ *works.* However, we do not mean that faith it-
“ self justifies us, for it is only an instrument with
“ which we embrace Christ our righteousness.—
“ We believe that our salvation consists in the re-
“ mission of our sins for Jesus Christ’s sake, and that
“ therein our righteousness before God is implied.
“ As David and Paul teach us, declaring this to
“ be the happiness of man, that God imputes righ-
“ teousness to him without works; and, therefore,
“ we always hold fast this foundation, ascribing all
“ the glory to God, humbling ourselves before
“ him, and acknowledging ourselves to be such as
“ we really are; without presuming to trust in any
“ thing in ourselves, or in any merit of ours, rely-
“ ing and resting upon the obedience of Christ
“ crucified alone, which becomes ours when we
“ believe in him. This is sufficient to cover all
“ our iniquities, and to give us confidence in ap-
“ proaching to God; freeing the conscience of
“ fear, terror, and dread. We believe, it is so far

“ from being true, that this justifying faith makes
“ men remiss in a holy and pious life, that on the
“ contrary, without it they would never do any
“ thing out of love to God, but only out of self-
“ love, or fear of damnation. It is impossible that
“ this holy faith can be unfruitful in man—it is *a*
“ *faith that worketh by love*, and excites man to the
“ practice of those works, which God has commanded
“ in his word.”* It is by preaching these evangel-
ical truths the name of the Lord, as a God of Sal-
vation, is this day recorded in this house. And now
witness these walls! which have often reverberated
the joyful sound of peace on earth, and good-will
to men. Witness ye columns! and thou lofty arch!
renewed and decorated with that simple magnifi-
cence which becomes a temple under the New
Testament. Witness ye angels! who, while invi-
sible to us, are ministering spirits, sent forth to mi-
nister to the heirs of salvation, and who rejoice in
the purity of our worship, and the conversion of
sinners. And O! be thou also witness exalted King
of Zion! who holdest the stars of the church in
thy right hand, and whose eyes are as a flame of
fire; witness thou, if ever false doctrines are taught
in this house—if ever we refuse to reverence thee!
Great God of Abraham, our God and Father, to
whom this building is again consecrated! *Let thine*
eyes be open toward this house night and day, even to-
wards the place, of which thou hast said, my name shall
be there. Make the priests' lips to keep knowledge, and

* Confession of Faith, art xxii. xxiii. xxiv.

teach them to seek the law at thy mouth. Purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may always offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

To these great purposes this building was formerly devoted, and for these important ends it is now raised from its ruins. But the mention of RUINS calls back our thoughts to past scenes, and presents disagreeable ideas to our minds. When destruction is caused by the immediate hand of heaven—by earthquakes, storms, or fire, we are silent before God, and dare not reply. But when men have been the instruments, it is difficult, although proper, to look up to the over-ruling power, and forget the interposition of the means. I dare not speak of the wanton cruelty of those who destroyed this temple, nor repeat the various indignities which have been perpetrated. It would be easy to mention facts which would chill your blood! A recollection of the groans of dying prisoners, which pierced this ceiling; or the sacrilegious sports and rough feats of horsemanship* exhibited within these walls, might raise sentiments in your minds that would, perhaps, not harmonize with those religious affections, which I wish, at present, to promote, and always to cherish.

The Lord has sufficiently vindicated our cause, and avenged us of those who rose up against us.—

* This church was, during the first part of the war, made a prison, and afterward turned, by the British troops, into a riding-school.

He girded our Joshua for the field, and led him, with his train of heroes, to victory. Heaven directed our councils, and wrought deliverance.—Our enemies themselves acknowledged an interposing Providence, and were obliged to say, *the Lord hath done great things for them*, while we repeated the shout of praise, THE LORD HATH DONE GREAT THINGS FOR US, WHEREOF WE ARE GLAD.

Through the long avenue of dangers and perplexity, while discouragements, like dark clouds, were hovering all around, who could penetrate the gloom, and foresee, that God would so soon bring order out of confusion—so soon dismiss the horrors of war, and grant an honorable peace—a perfect revolution? Where was it ever seen, excepting only in Israel, *that God took a nation out of the midst of another nation, with such a mighty hand, and a stretched out arm?* Who could have predicted, that from such indigested materials, with such short experience, and within so few years, an efficient, liberal, and pervading government would have been formed?—A station and rank is now obtained among the nations of the earth; and, if the full enjoyment of civil and religious liberty is a constituent part of social happiness—if the prospects of the rising importance, strength, and greatness of our new empire, are of any weight in the scale, we may safely pronounce ourselves, at this day, to be the happiest nation in the world. A nation where all the rights of man are perfectly secured. With-

out a monarchy—without hereditary nobility, and without an hierarchy. Hail, happy land! A land of liberty!—of science!—of religion! Here an undisturbed freedom in worship forms the first principle of an equal government, and is claimed as a birth-right, which none of our rulers dare call in question, or control. Here no sect is legally preferred with exclusive prerogatives—the chief magistrate worships as a private citizen, and legislators, by their influential example, not by penal-laws, prove nursing fathers to the church of Christ. In this happy and elevated situation, the ruins of our temples, and all we have sustained, appear a price too small to mention. We are more than compensated. We have forgiven, and we forget past injuries. God has abundantly made up for all our former griefs. *When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.—Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.* We are a happy people—we feel and know that we are so. The labors of the husbandman prosper, and there is plenty in all our borders. Commerce is enlarged, and public credit established. The education of youth is universally patronized, and there is no complaining in our streets.—In safety we sit, every man under his own vine and fig-tree, and there are none to make us afraid.—With sufficient room to accommodate nations, and a government adequate to all the important purposes of society, we are not only at ease ourselves, but extend our arms, and cordially invite

an oppressed world to come under our shade, and share in our happiness. Happy is that people that is in such a case! yea, happy is that people whose GOD IS THE LORD!—Whether we shall continue thus happy, will greatly depend upon our wisdom and justice—our industry and manners, but principally upon our faithfully recording the name of the Lord. According to the measure in which the religion of the blessed Jesus is honored and prevails, our land will be truly happy, and our liberty secure. This holy religion establishes the purest morality, and inculcates the reciprocal obligations which members of society are under to each other: It engages men of all ranks, by the highest sanctions, conscientiously to fulfil the duties of their station; and it is, without controversy, the surest pledge of the divine protection. The maintenance of this, in its purity, will most effectually establish our invaluable blessings, and as this declines, our ruin will hasten. See the rule of Providence with respect to nations, Jer. xviii. 9, 10. *At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it OBEY NOT MY VOICE, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said, I would benefit them.*

While others, at our political anniversary, in their animated orations, employ all the powers of eloquence, to confirm your love of liberty, and, by enraptured views of civil blessings, touch with transport all the springs of life; I desire, with plain-

ness of speech, but with a zeal becoming a minister of the gospel, to raise your views to heaven, and persuade you wisely to improve your precious privileges. Seven years are not yet elapsed since we returned to this city in peace. And lo! in less than seven years, two ruined churches have been, by us, repaired. The Lord hath strengthened our hands, and given success to our efforts. Let a humble sense of our dependance upon him, and a recollection of his numerous mercies, call forth lively gratitude upon this occasion. *Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.* It is, my brethren, a circumstance which, upon our part, is altogether fortuitous, but it deserves your notice, that, in the direction of Providence, you have more than one object, upon this memorable Fourth of July, that claims your attention. While you glow with patriotic ardor for your country, and pour out fervent prayers for its rising honor and happiness; you are also exulting that the gates of this house are again opened to you. *Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise; be thankful, unto him, and bless his name.* With ardent prayers, and solemn vows, I know you now unite with me in this sacred exercise; and may your ardent prayers, and solemn vows be ratified in heaven! But suffer me, in faithfulness, to warn you against the deceitfulness of your hearts towards God; and to charge you to mingle a holy fear and trembling, this day, with our rejoicings. Remember Shiloh

—remember what has already befallen this house, and never forget that you have to do with a holy God, who is jealous for his honor and worship.—Holiness becometh the house of God for ever; and all who name the name of Christ must depart from iniquity. *Keep, therefore, thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools. When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it, for he hath no pleasure in fools. Pay that which thou hast vowed.*

With what humble awe and pious reverence should ministers of the gospel engage in the service of the sanctuary! Upon us, my venerable and respected colleagues, a new burthen is this day laid—to us a new door is opened! I congratulate you on this auspicious occasion, and hope we may view it as a token for good from the Lord. Let it encourage us to persevere and become more faithful in preaching a crucified Jesus, and inciting this people to worship God in spirit and in truth. But where is our LAIDLIE!* Where is now that bold herald of the gospel, who feared not the face of man, nor courted the applause of fellow-worms!—He spoke with authority, and what flowed from

* The Rev. Doctor Archibald Laidlie was born and educated in Scotland. He was ordained, in 1760, a minister in Flushing, in Zealand. The Dutch church in New-York finding it necessary to have divine service performed in English, called him for that purpose, and he arrived here in March, 1764. He was a man of genius, learning, and eminent piety—a very instructive, bold, and animated preacher; and his indefatigable labors were eminently blessed of the Lord. He died of a consumptive illness at Red-Hook, in October, 1779, during our exile from the city.

his heart, reached the hearts of others. How often from these heights of Zion have his words dropped as the rain, while sinners trembled and saints rejoiced. But he is gone, and rests from his labors! His name still survives, and he, being dead, yet speaketh. Excuse this tribute of affection—forgive this tear, which I owe to the memory of a man, who was once dear to me, as a fellow-laborer in this house, and whose ministry was highly acceptable, and greatly blessed to this people. From the example of those who proved faithful in their day, let us, my worthy colleagues, be prompted to the most vigorous exertions in the service of our master. May you be long spared in mercy to the church! and, when the lips, which now address you, are mouldering in the tomb, O may you live to record the name of the Lord, and be the happy instruments of building that spiritual temple which is founded upon the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone! Late, very late, after gaining many seals to your ministry, may you close your exemplary and useful lives in peace, and obtain the crown of righteousness! The blessing of the God of Salvation be upon you!

The aged men who were present at the dedication of the second temple wept at the remembrance of the first. But, blessed be God! you, who worshipped in this house formerly, have no cause for weeping on that account. This house is restored to its former splendor, and the Lord has exceeded

our highest expectations. We have no reason to weep for the house, but we may weep and be ashamed for the hardness of our hearts; for the want of faith and gratitude—of love and holiness. Many bitter tears might also be shed, when looking around, we find so many wanting, who used formerly to worship with us in this place. Alas! how many parents—how many husbands and wives—how many children and friends, have gone down to the silent grave since last we assembled in this house! But I may not indulge the mournful recollection. The joy of the Lord is to be our strength this day. May you, my brethren, be spared *to go up with the multitude to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise: May you live to see his power and glory in the sanctuary, and your souls be fed as with marrow and fatness!* The Lord bless you with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus!

You who are young, behold the goodness of God in providing the means of grace, and bringing the gospel in its purity to you! Remember to whom we have dedicated this place. The once crucified, but now exalted Jesus, is Lord of this house. Here his name is recorded. See to it that you never defile his temple; make not his house a house of merchandize, nor sell his truths. Yet a little while and *we shall bid adieu to ordinances and to you.* But we rejoice in the prospect of leaving you the rich treasure of a faithful profession and spiritual worship. Preserve with anxious so-

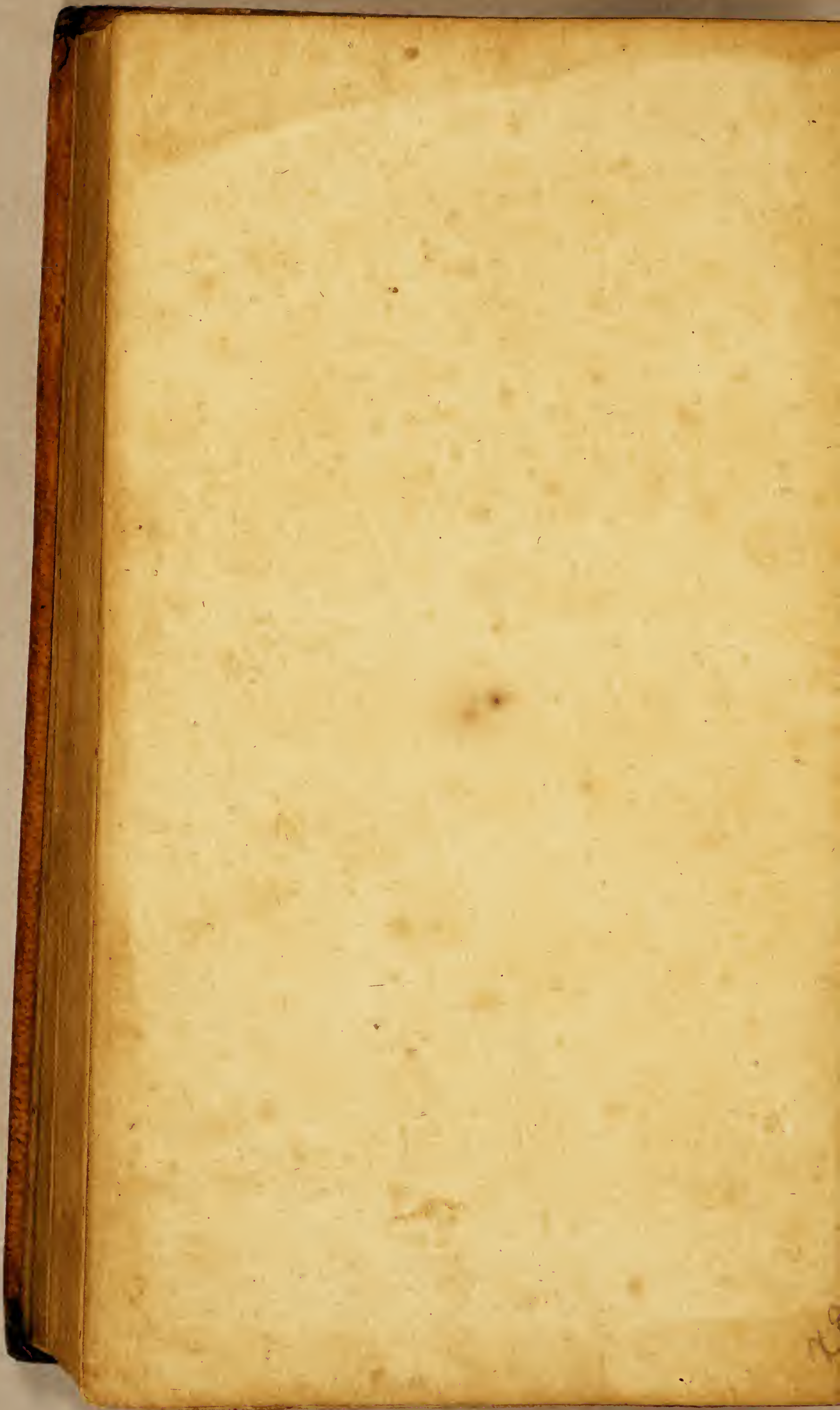
licitude the precious inheritance. It is your life, it is the pledge of all your mercies. Improve the means. Search the scriptures. Understand the doctrines you profess. Rest not in a name to live, but look unto Jesus and find life and peace in him. *Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.* Beware of ever being ashamed of Christ. Sin not away your privileges, and provoke not a holy God to withdraw his presence and blessing.

It is not, my children, without very tender emotions, that we look around and consider you as our dearest hope; our highest joy; the rising pillars of the church and state. Soon you are to succeed us in the duties we now strive to fulfil. Very soon you will have to bear the sacred burthen which will devolve from us to you. I charge you, in the sight of God, to be faithful. Be faithful to your country; be faithful to the church. Forsake not assembling yourselves together. Record the blessed name. Continue to record it, that God may dwell with you, and with your children's children, as long as the sun shall endure. *But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold the heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, how much less this house which we have built?* The heaven is indeed his throne, and the earth is his footstool, but here is the house that we have built unto him, and here is the place of his rest. May it ever be a house of

prayer! A house of praise! A house of blessings! *Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sake, I will now say, PEACE BE WITHIN THEE. Because of the house of the Lord our God, I WILL SEEK THY GOOD. Great King of Zion, fill it with thy glory! When writing up the people, let it be counted that many were born here, and here trained up for that house, which is not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; bless all thy churches! let Israel be saved! and from the rising of the sun, even to the going down of the same, let thy name be great among the Gentiles. In every place let incense be offered unto thy name, and a pure offering! AMEN.*

THE END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

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